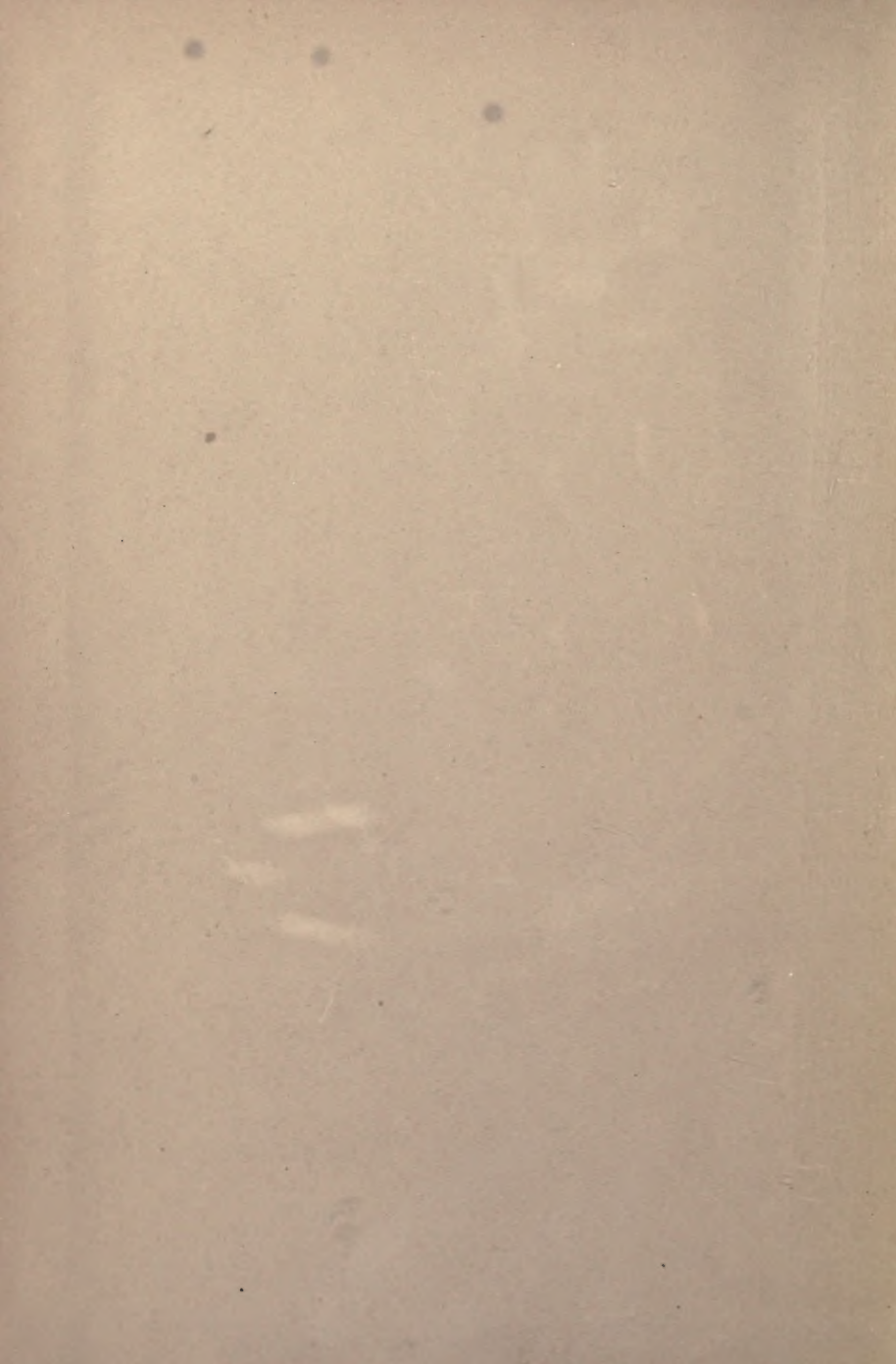



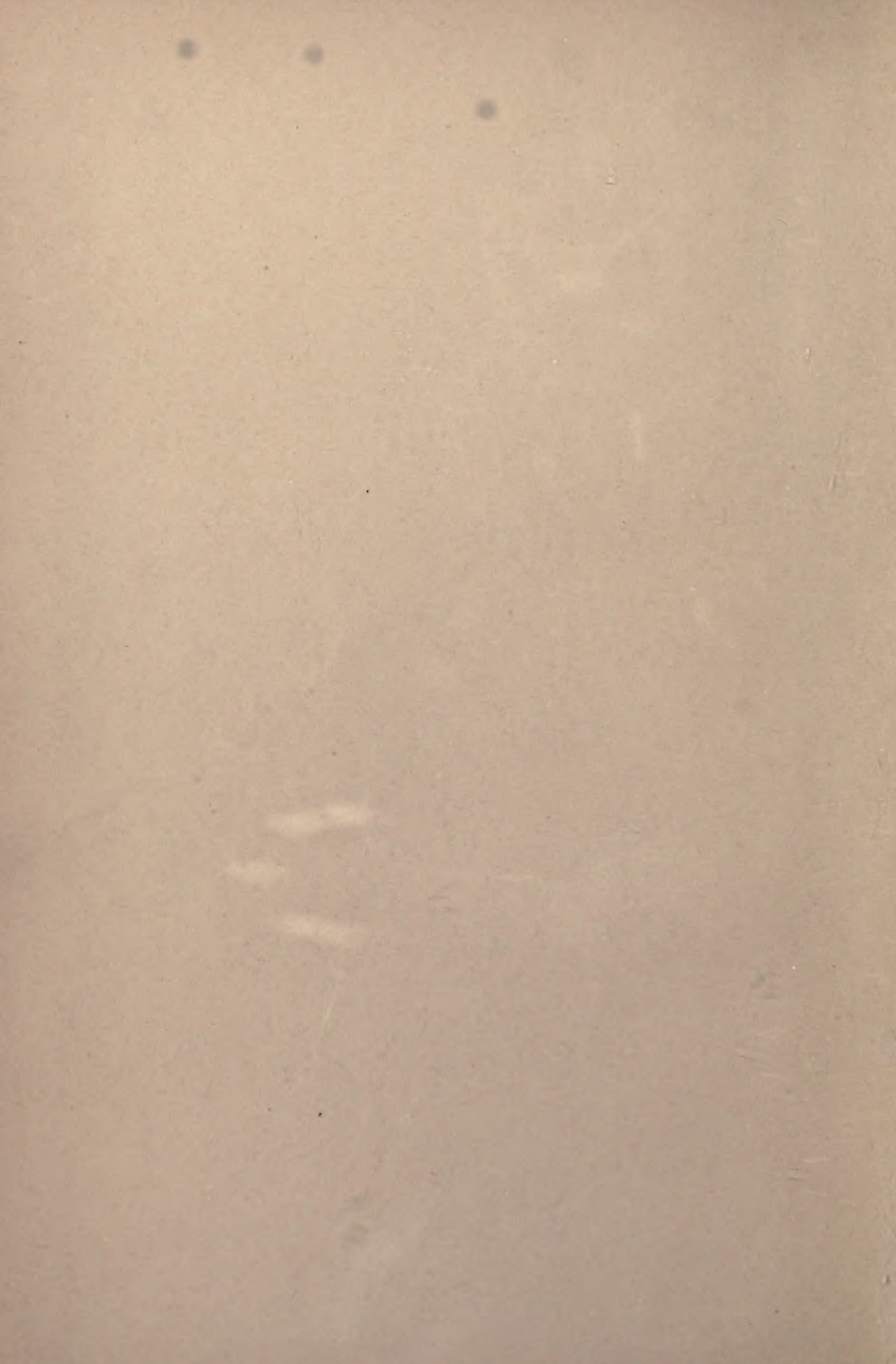
THOUGHTS
on BUSINESS

Waldo Pondray Warren





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THOUGHTS ON BUSINESS



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THOUGHTS ON BUSINESS

BY
WALDO PONDRAY WARREN

“

“THE CREATION OF A THOUSAND
FORESTS IS IN ONE ACORN.”

—EMERSON



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25.4.49

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FORBES & COMPANY
1907

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"Even in war, moral power is to physical as three parts out of four."

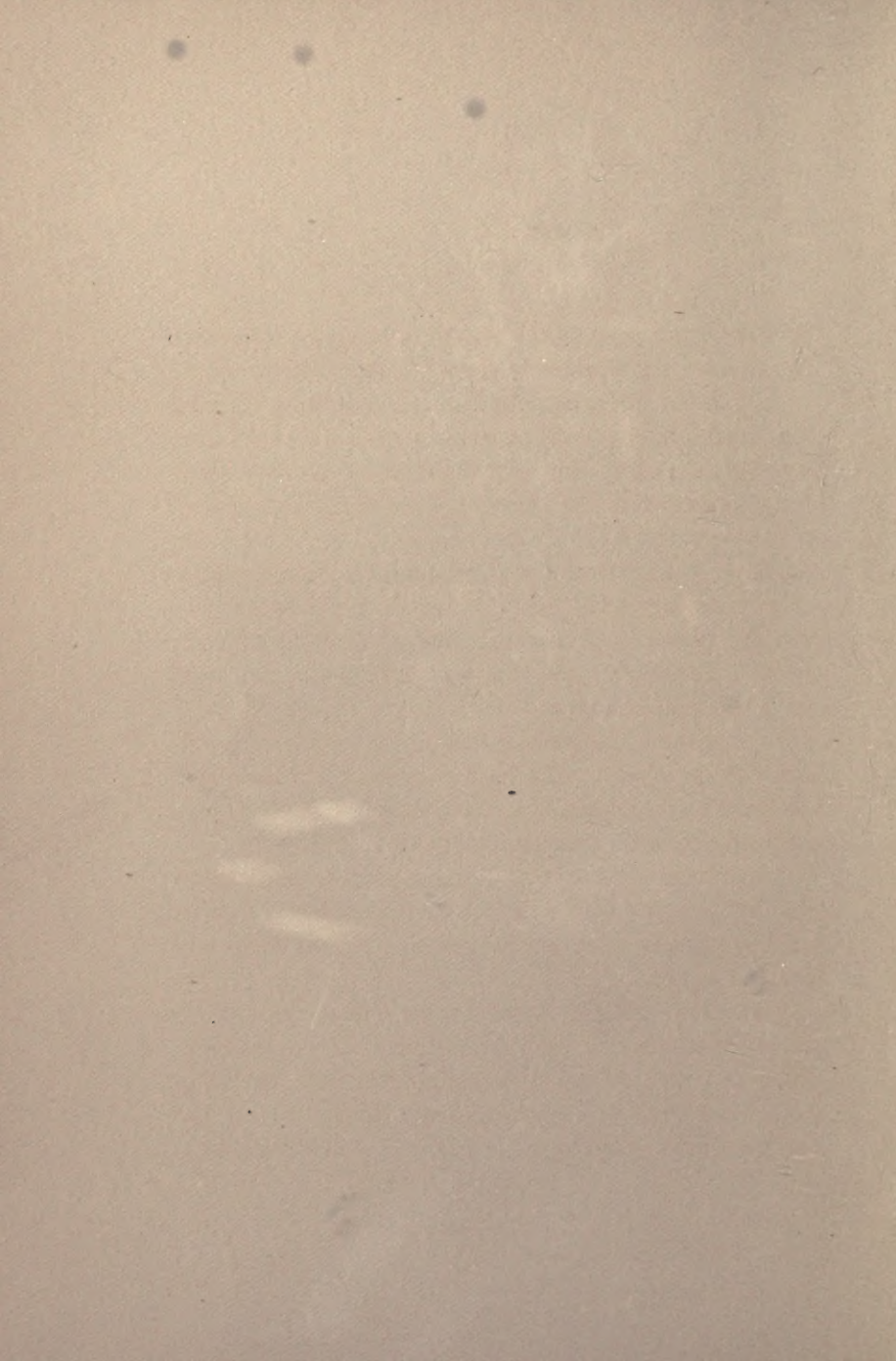
—NAPOLEON.

"The men of action are, after all, only the unconscious instruments of the men of thought."

—HEINE.

"I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of a man to elevate his life by conscious endeavor."

—THOREAU.



PREFACE

THIS book is an outgrowth of a business experience gained through many years of association with one of America's great commercial institutions. During those years I have learned, perhaps more surely than anything else, the value of a right thought. I have seen how men's careers have been marred by basing their actions on unsound theories of life and business. And I have also seen how a change from a wrong thought to a right thought, perhaps during a moment of casual conversation, has been the means of advancing a man to a higher place in his work, opening his eyes to a broader field of opportunity and wholesome activity.

I count the acquisition of certain thoughts as the red-letter days of my life. To those moments I can look back and clearly trace long series of fortunate events, which stand out as conspicuous witnesses to the value of the ideas then acquired. It sometimes almost startles me to think how different the course of my career might have been had I not received certain thoughts at certain times and acted upon them.

Many such thoughts have a value only to the individual, and in connection with the problems of the moment; others have an application to thousands of men and women, in connection with many varied experiences. It has long been my custom to make a note of such thoughts as

TH O U G H T S O N B U S I N E S S

have this wider sphere of usefulness, and I have treasured them more carefully than the miser his gold, knowing as I do their great value, their capacity for unlimited multiplication, and their latent possibilities for good.

Before sending these ideas out into the world I have carefully endeavored to make certain that none of them is untrue to life and experience, none a half-truth that through a jingle of words may pass for a whole truth, and not one a jumping-gap for an athlete that may become a pitfall for the unskillful. I have been unwilling to pass these thoughts with only the test of my own judgment and convictions, and have submitted them to the scrutiny of a number of experienced persons, in order to have them tested from many points of view.

These "Thoughts on Business" were, for the most part, first published, one a day, in a list of newspapers. With some revision and the addition of new matter, they are now presented in this form. The author sincerely hopes that the reader will find them in some degree helpful in moulding the spirit of a well-rounded business life.

WALDO PONDRAY WARREN.

Chicago, September, 1907.

CONTENTS

STARTING POINTS

The Spirit of Progress	17
What is Success?	19
The Right Standpoint	20
A Motive for Action	21
The Moral Foundation	22
The Greatest Business Maxim	23
Be a Man First	24
All Work a School	25
Do More	26
Turning Points	27
Think Big	28
Not Biggest But Best	29
Doing Big Things	30
Hidden Strength	31
Be a Whole Man	32
The Best as a Standard	33
Consider the Need	34
Looking Ahead	35
Ideas	36
Pioneer Work	37
Opportunities That Wait	38
Where the Trouble Lies	39
The Lever Principle	40
Learn to Ask Questions	41
How to Acquire Tact	42
Courtesy: A Business Ideal	43
Are You a Diplomat?	44

SELF-IMPROVEMENT

Appreciate Your Capacity	47
Time to Think	48

T H O U G H T S O N B U S I N E S S

Are You in a Treadmill?	49
Continuous Growth Necessary	50
Ability is Capital	51
The Reliable Man	52
Are You Waiting to be Told?	53
Learn While You Can	54
Get a Broad View	55
From Acorn to Oak	56
Study for the Place Ahead	57
A Great Art	58
The Men of To-morrow	59
Not Counting the Time	60
"I Seen"	61
The Word to the Wise	62
Learn to be Thorough	63
Practice-Work	64
Working for Yourself	65
Headed for the Top	66
The Right Track	67
Picking the Way	68
Unfolding a Task	69
Through Other Eyes	70
The Force of Illustration	71
All Business Akin	72
The Contagion of Littleness	73
Betting a Million to One	74
The Danger of Personal Influence	75
How Friends May Limit Us	76
Make Some New Friends	77
"Seeing Things"	78
The Value of Travel	79
Use Your Wastebasket More	80
When Letters are Compared	81
Measuring Experience	82
Our Daily Work Sacred	83

ABOUT METHODS

Pulling Together as One	87
Co-Operation	88

T H O U G H T S O N B U S I N E S S

Newness Inevitable	89
Don't Split Hairs	90
Keep Your Promises	91
Give Credit for Ideas	92
Perfecting the Product	93
Systematic Criticism	94
The Looks of a Letter	95
Doing More than You Can	96
Leave Worry to the System	97
Red Tape, the Robber	98
Vary the Work	99
Interruptions Waste Time	100
The Mote and the Beam	101
Fixed Salaries	102
Unconscious Disorder	103
Too Much Noise	104
Mind the Little Things	105
How Time is Wasted	106
A Tallow-Candle Standard	107
Theories and Facts	108
Play Fair	109
Waiting in the Ante-Room	110
Provide against Dispute	111
The New Man in Power	112
Suspense	113

DEVELOPING THE WORKERS

Multiply Your Assets	117
Teaching Employes	118
What Employes Need	119
Stooping to Conquer	120
The Unwise Reprimand	121
A Task for Reformers	122
Helping the Unambitious	123
The Master's Eye	124
In the Pay Envelope	125
Good Reading for Employes	126
The Development of Enthusiasm	127
A Promotion System	128

T H O U G H T S O N B U S I N E S S

The Other Side	129
Enlightened Selfishness	130
A Thoughtless Waste	131
Preventing Temptation	132
Follow up your Work	133
Wasting Time	134
Blue Laws Unnecessary	135
Criticising Superiors	136
What the Employer Doesn't Know	137
Why Mistakes are Made	138
Selecting a Man	139
Missionaries of Refinement	140

WITH THE MANAGER

The Manager's Responsibility	143
Going to Headquarters	144
Don't be Too Necessary	145
Handling Men	146
Talk it Over	147
The Friendly Manager	148
The Touch of Power	149
Weigh Your Words	150
Show Your Appreciation	151
Give Credit for the Best	152
The Bane of Fear	153
Golden Eggs	154
The Frost that Blights	155
Forsaking the Point	156
Move on Ahead	157
Snap Judgment	158
The Career of a Man	159
Discharging a Man	160
The Disturbing Element	161
"Let Us"	162
Hold Your Temper	163
The Manly Apology	164
Impersonal Criticism	165
The Scrutiny of Detail	166
Common Sense Perfection	167

THOUGHTS ON BUSINESS

Profitable Reforms	168
Let the Boy Do It	169
Running Down an Error	170
Breaking the New Man In	171
Enjoying Life as You Go	172
A New Broom	173
Open the Channels	174

BUYING AND SELLING

Civilization Advanced by the Seller	177
The Salesman's Work	178
The Goods Behind the Man	179
Courtesy Draws Business	180
"Some an Hundred Fold"	181
Don't Justify a Defect	182
Tactful Dealing	183
A Hint for Salesmen	184
Common Sense in Selling	185
Know Your Goods	186
While Others Wait	187
Calling on King Dodo	188
The Pink Tape on the Celery	189
The Percentage Basis	190

WORDS BY THE WAY

Feel Your Way	193
Getting a Scheme	194
Careful Investments	195
Look Beneath the Surface	196
"Good Morning"	197
Moral Ventilation	198
Please	199
The Value of Humor	200
Power in Poetry	201
Pass It On	202
Reaching His Audience	203
Acquiring Good Taste	204
Rotten Apple Economy	205
The Tattered Shirt Sophistry	206

THOUGHTS ON BUSINESS

Not Here Below	207
How Honest are You?	208
Unwise Changes.	209
Refusing to Grow Old	210
Business Methods in Schools	211
Are We Actors?	212
Letters that Do Good	213
Burn the Thistle Seed	214
Reconsider Lost Efforts	215
A Grain of Salt	216
It Pays to Kick	217
Newspaper Individuality	218
The Ideal Newspaper	219
Comparative Typography	221
Honest Advertising	222

GLEANINGS

Epigrams and Paragraphs	225
The Outlook	237

STARTING POINTS



THOUGHTS ON BUSINESS

THE SPIRIT OF PROGRESS

THE greatest asset a business or an individual can have is the Spirit of Progress. Without that all else is largely in vain. With it every good thing is possible.

What is the Spirit of Progress? It is the desire to know what constitutes true success and the willingness to take the patient steps which lead to it; the desire to correct errors, traits and tendencies which retard progress, and the willingness to receive new ideas and act upon them; the desire to act from sound motives, and the willingness to give up false and temporary success for vital and permanent growth; the eagerness to utilize every wholesome opportunity, the enthusiasm to strive for excellence for its own sake, and the energy to push on, pausing only when the victory is won.

With this spirit the growth of a business is inevitable. It is as natural as for a tree to grow.

The world may furnish many opportunities, appreciation will quicken some motives, and the onward movement of the world can change some conditions, but that spark of fire — the Spirit of Progress — must come from within, must spring up in a moment of noble resolve, and

THOUGHTS ON BUSINESS

must never be allowed to die, never to wane, never to waver.

Examine into the lives and actions of men who have made the real successes in any wholesome line of activity and you will see how that vital spark made all their achievements possible — and maybe you will find the spark yourself.

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

THE definition of success is undergoing a change. The publicity given to the methods and practices of many men of wealth and business control has done much to arouse the better nature in every man to question the validity of such success. The ridiculous utterances of certain specialists whose devotion to a theory has warped their common sense have made plain to the practical man that specialism may become the reduction to absurdity. The man who thinks so much about his business that he cares nothing about literature is also losing caste. And the man who is so deeply schooled in the theoretical side of life that he has no practical point of contact with the world may also be regarded as out of the race for true success.

By their observation of extreme types men are being forced to the conclusion that moderation in all things is essential to a true judgment of all things; and that the ideal life is the well-rounded life, with broad views, broad culture, broad sympathies and broad purposes for good — the ability to separate the good from the bad in all lines of thought and activity. In this broader view business loses rank as an end and becomes a means to an end — a means for making a livelihood, a field of wholesome activity, and a school for the development of character and mental vigor.

THE RIGHT STANDPOINT

THE progressive man naturally enjoys hard work, especially such work as calls for resource, initiative and skill. He regards his work as a school in which every new experience is an interesting and helpful lesson. He is eager to take new responsibilities, eager to do any piece of unfamiliar work, and eager to do more and more skillfully the work he already knows well.

The unprogressive man — poor fellow — often has just as much natural ability as the other, but he has a wrong idea about work. Sometimes he works hard in the wrong direction because he thinks it is the right one. More often his failure to get ahead is due to the fact that he does not bring all his powers and enthusiasm to bear upon the work in hand. His whole heart is not in his task. The unprogressive man does not consider his work a school, but vaguely imagines that it is a sort of punishment to be avoided if possible. It matters not to him that the world needs to have the work done — he thinks only of his own immediate comfort, and in so doing loses the great reward which the world pays to its real helpers — the joy of a useful life.

If you know an unprogressive man — one who shirks because he thinks he gains ease, and who works only from necessity — help him to see these two opposite standpoints. One clear glimpse of the true relations between him and his work will sometimes inspire a man — and give to the world another progressive worker.

A MOTIVE FOR ACTION

To allow ourselves to be cheated out of an opportunity is not only unfair to ourselves, but it is unfair to others, for it also cheats them out of the good we might be able to do them if we had taken advantage of the opportunity.

Let us hope that there are few men selfish enough to think that a man owes nothing to his fellow men. It is a commonly accepted thought that a man has certain moral obligations to others, and that he who willfully neglects them forfeits his right to the respect of his fellows.

The endeavor to attain proficiency in any wholesome line of work, to surpass the standards of merit that have been attained by others, and to improve continually on our own past achievements, is the spirit of the honorable life. It is not for ourselves alone that we strive to attain a high standard, but because we should do our share toward the general progress of the world. To see it thus gives new energy to our endeavors and makes success more sure. A man's interest cannot be entirely separated from that of his fellows. The highest success cannot be attained without something of altruism in our motives, for that lifts our thoughts to a higher capacity than selfishness can possibly do. In order to do your best for yourself you are forced to be an altruist.

THE MORAL FOUNDATION

EVERY ambitious worker keenly desires to find what is commonly called "the secret of success." Many writers have endeavored to assist in finding it, and much good has been accomplished by their efforts. Each man, according to his experience and purposes, sees the question from a different viewpoint. But however varied may be the views and the manner of expressing them, all men are practically agreed on the indispensable value of moral qualities. The very strength of the mind lies in pureness of heart. Judgment is a perception of the true relations of things, energy is born of purpose, accuracy is the love of perfection, and sincerity — the corner stone of every worthy structure — is quarried only from the depths of the truly honest heart.

Any so-called "secret of success" which ignores the moral foundation is either superficial or unsafe. Cleverness without morality deceives most the persons who practice it. To have the letter without the spirit makes machines of men; and to have any spirit less than the best is to miss something in the measure of success. Crafty policies are not wisdom, but are ignorant substitutes for sound morals. Nothing can ever take the place of those great fundamentals — honesty, sincerity and a pure mind. The real secret of success must ever be, "Think right, do right."

THE GREATEST BUSINESS MAXIM

THE business life affords perhaps the best opportunity to test the practical value of the Golden Rule. It is significant that business men are coming more and more to see and advocate this rule — not merely as a result of moral teachings received outside of business circles, but as a conclusion which business experience itself has forced upon them.

In business affairs the practice of the Golden Rule stands for all that is honorable, and progressive, and just. The business houses which attain a measure of prestige and wholesome reputation are those in which this spirit in some degree obtains. And perhaps no wrong trait in the personality of a business more quickly receives the censure and discredit of other business men than does the absence of fairness — which is but another way of saying the absence of the spirit of the Golden Rule.

With a record of centuries to attest its value, and the evidences in its favor accumulating day by day as men become more enlightened, the Golden Rule stands pre-eminent as the world's greatest business maxim. The toppling towers of vast business interests that have been built on a less worthy basis show the insecurity of all seeming success obtained otherwise than by acting habitually on this fundamental moral law.

BE A MAN FIRST

BEFORE one can be a sound business man he must first be a sound man. When an artist paints a picture containing human figures he must not try to hide defective proportions of a figure by the clothing, but must first make sure that the outline of the figure is correct before he attempts to paint the clothing. One of the worst faults a picture can have is to be "out of drawing." No amount of wonder-work in color or conception can atone for faults in the proportion of the figures. And there are few to defend a picture in which such faults are to be found.

There are some persons in business life who think they can cover up the evidences of a defective manhood by laying on thick the colors of an outward business success. They think that if they can only get the place and the power they will also get the honor and the satisfaction that come from worthy achievement. But like the unskilled artist, they deceive themselves most of all. Nothing can atone for defective character, and nothing can hide it. A few superficial persons may give undue credit to mere appearances, but the critics whose opinions determine the real standing of the work will not be deceived — and their criticisms will take away any shallow satisfaction that may be found in superficial applause. Nothing but sound manhood can win the true reward of sound manhood.

ALL WORK A SCHOOL

THE man who gets the most out of life is the man who lives to learn. An old man, walking by the banks of a river, said to his grandson: "See this river, my child. It has a different interest for each one of us. That man yonder thinks of it merely as a place to fish. The boys down there think of it as a swimming-pool. The man who owns the sawmill considers it a part of his workshop. Those young people in the launch think of it as a pleasure stream. The farmer finds that it enriches his fields. The cows come down to drink. The old settlers tell us of a battle that was fought near the bend. And you and I find it a many-sided object lesson. You are soon to go out into the world, and you will find life like this river. You will observe that every man thinks of it from his own standpoint. Some are idlers along the banks waiting for chance to bring them what they want; some row up stream and some float down; some find refreshment, some only pleasure; some see only the hard work; and some are looking back at the past, thinking of the battles that have been fought in years gone by. But you and I will find it a great object lesson — a school where all the activities of men and women become lessons, and where progress in wisdom and goodness is the chief motive in all that we do."

DO MORE

THE man who makes the best progress is the man who does more than he is told. Some men think they have done their full duty when they perform certain routine work. They consider that they are being paid fifteen dollars a week for fifteen dollars' worth of work — and they measure out the correct amount with as much care as the grocer measures out rice, putting in and taking out a few grains until the scales balance.

But the progressive man goes about his work with the spirit of the athlete. The satisfaction of accomplishing a feat, the knowledge that with each trial more skill is developed, forms one of the best incentives to good work. The athlete does not confine his practice to a certain number of runs and jumps, but keeps at it until he has achieved some greater degree of skill than he ever had before. He delights in attempting harder and harder feats because it means more and more skill.

Thus does the truly progressive man love his work. He does not consider that he is working merely for his salary nor for his employers, but for himself — for the development of his individual capacity and skill. He delves into things not required of him, because he wants to gain power to do more — because that is the normal impetus of a progressive mind.

TURNING POINTS

COURTESY, kindness and thoughtfulness always have their reward. History is full of incidents which show upon what little things careers have turned. And where one such incident is known there are thousands that are unknown. A man is impressed by a lad's polished shoes, makes inquiries which lead to his employment, and the boy becomes a captain of industry. A cheerful smile wins a friend, who introduces us to a circle of helpful men and women, whose ideas raise our standards and influence our lives. Even the simplest little acts of courtesy and kindness have been known to open broad channels for good.

The reverse is also true. A man lost a valuable business partnership because he made an unkind remark about another on the day the papers were to have been signed. We never know what friendships and opportunities are closed to us because of unfavorable impressions made by the neglect of the little amenities of life.

We travel a road that branches in many directions. One careless turning may affect our entire journey. Only by making sure that we are taking the right direction at every point can we hope to reach the best that is possible to us. But if each purpose and act expresses the highest standards we know, any hour may become the gateway to a larger field of opportunities.

THINK BIG

MEN often think of a position as being just about so big and no bigger, when, as a matter of fact, a position is often what one makes it. A man was making about \$1,500 a year out of a certain position and thought he was doing all that could be done to advance the business. The employer thought otherwise, and gave the place to another man who soon made the position worth \$8,000 a year — at exactly the same commission.

The difference was in the men — in other words in what the two men thought about the work. One had a little conception of what the work should be, and the other had a big conception of it. One thought little thoughts and the other thought big thoughts.

The standards of two men may differ, not especially because one is naturally more capable than the other, but because one is familiar with big things and the other is not. The time was when the former worked in a smaller scope himself, but when he saw a wider view of what his work might be he rose to the occasion and became a bigger man. It is just as easy to think of a mountain as to think of a hill — when you turn your mind to contemplate it. The mind is like a rubber band — you can stretch it to fit almost anything, but it draws in to a small scope when you let go.

Make it your business to know what is the best that might be in your line of work, and stretch your mind to conceive it, and then devise some way to attain it.

NOT BIGGEST BUT BEST

THE inclination to measure things by quantity rather than by quality, warps the judgment, and must be avoided by the man who would arrive at a just estimate. It takes something more than size to constitute the best.

The salesman who oversells his customers may make the best showing on the books, but he may at the same time, be undermining the good will of the business. The biggest salary is not always the best position. The most widely circulated novel is not always the best book. The large numbers who support a theory do not assure its soundness. The largest business may not afford the best opportunity. The costliest material may not make the most desirable garment. And the most money does not necessarily make the best man.

To measure by magnitude rather than by intrinsic worth and practical utility is superficial. The best evidences of the progress of the world are not that we build larger houses, and travel faster, and do business on a bigger scale, but that we are becoming more disposed to look beneath the surface of things, and judge not from appearances but from actual worth. Not quantity but quality is the true standard.

DOING BIG THINGS

BIG things are only little things put together. I was greatly impressed with this fact one morning as I stood watching the workmen erecting the steel framework for a tall office building. A shrill whistle rang out as a signal, a man over at the engine pulled a lever, a chain from the derrick was lowered, and the whistle rang out again. A man stooped down and fastened the chain around the center of a steel beam, stepped back and blew the whistle once more. Again the lever was moved at the engine, and the steel beam soared into the air up to the sixteenth story, where it was made fast by little bolts.

The entire structure, great as it was, towering far above all the neighboring buildings, was made up of pieces of steel, and stone, and wood, put together according to a plan. The plan was first imagined, then penciled, then carefully drawn, and then followed by the workmen. It was all a combination of little things.

It is encouraging to think of this when you are confronted by a big task. Remember that it is only a group of little tasks, any one of which you can easily do. It is ignorance of this fact that makes some men afraid to try.

HIDDEN STRENGTH

It is a great day in a man's life when he truly begins to discover himself. The latent capacities of every man are greater than he realizes, and he may find them if he diligently seeks for them. A man may own a tract of land for many years without knowing its value. He may think of it as merely a pasture. But one day he discovers evidences of coal and finds a rich vein beneath his land. While mining and prospecting for coal he discovers deposits of granite. In boring for water he strikes oil. Later he discovers a vein of copper ore, and,— after that, silver and gold. These things were there all the time—even when he thought of his land merely as a pasture. But they have a value only when they are discovered and utilized.

Not every pasture contains deposits of silver and gold, neither oil nor granite, nor even coal. But beneath the surface of every man there must be, in the nature of things, a latent capacity greater than has yet been discovered. And one discovery must lead to another until the man finds the deep wealth of his own possibilities. History is full of the acts of men who discovered somewhat of their own capacity; but history has yet to record the man who fully discovered all that he might have been.

BE A WHOLE MAN

THAT some men rise in a few years from the lowest to the highest positions is always a matter of interest and encouragement to others. One man I recall is now manager of a large mercantile concern, employing several thousand persons. Eight years ago he began as an office clerk at ten dollars a week. He was unknown to the proprietors, and had neither friend nor relative to aid his advancement.

After making due allowances for favorable circumstances, the fact remains that he was able to fill the higher position. So we must conclude that it was not circumstances but rather some quality of mind that made him equal to the opportunity. He doubtless had integrity, thoroughness and energy — and he must also have had judgment, adaptability and sincerity. But less successful men have had these. One thing especially he had, a very essential quality, comprehensiveness. He had the ability to grasp the whole plan and purpose of the business and could appreciate the relative importance of the various parts. He did not narrow his interests and sympathies down to a mere fragment, but endeavored to appreciate the entire business as one great composite idea. All real progress is in the expansion of thought — that measures the difference between a man and his fellows.

THE BEST AS A STANDARD

It is always worth while to know what the best looks like — whether you are able to bring your own production up to it or not.

A printer began to show a marked improvement in the quality of his work, and one of his customers asked him about it.

“I was in the office of one of my customers a few weeks ago,” he said, “and for the first time in many years I saw a really good collection of fine printing. I had seen occasional specimens now and then, but nothing especially fine, and along with it I had seen a great deal of commonplace stuff, so I might say I didn’t really know what the best looked like. But a salesman from a high-class printing house that specializes on the finest grade of work was there with a splendid portfolio of samples, and the buyer asked him to let me look them over. That lot of samples was to me a liberal education in fine printing. It changed my ideas completely. I felt about the way I did when I first came from a country village to a big city. For years I had had a sign over my door, ‘Fine Job Printing,’ but I felt heartily ashamed of it when I saw it again. And I made up my mind that I would live up to it or take it down. That one view of really good stuff changed my whole standard.”

CONSIDER THE NEED

THE logical starting point of successful manufacture and merchandising is to discern a need and then devise a way to fill it. The reverse of this is merely to make something you happen to think of and then try to sell it. The merchant who carries goods that nobody wants, and fails to supply the goods that are in demand, will soon find that he must change his methods or fail.

It is said that the United States imports from South America nearly twice the volume of merchandise that it exports to that country. The chief explanation is that they sell us what we want, and we try to sell them what they don't want. Our manufacturers do not study the needs of that country, but offer for sale the goods that are made for the home market. While we are slowly learning this fact the manufacturers of Europe are reaping a rich harvest because they make for export the very things that will fit into South American needs.

No merchant or manufacturer can afford to overlook this fundamental point. A sympathetic appreciation of the needs of others, and a desire to fill those needs in a way that will serve the best interests of humanity — this is the true basis for all wholesome business activity. Success gravitates to the man who works from this standpoint.

LOOKING AHEAD

THE outlook for the future of human industry is inspiring to every earnest and thoughtful person. The undeveloped possibilities of nature are amazing. Millions of acres of forests and fields, mines and mountains await — not merely development, but even the practical recognition of their actual existence. The very contemplation of the possibilities of industry should awaken the ambition of every sincere man — an ambition to take some effective part in making available to all humanity the necessities, the utilities, and the wholesome accompaniments of life.

How shall a man equip himself to take a worthy part in the work of development which the coming years must surely bring? Millions ask themselves that question as they realize that the years ahead will surely require of them a deeper measure of effective activity than they have given thus far. And they are answering it for themselves in their present efforts for self-improvement — by acquiring sound business and social principles, by the broadening of their sympathies, the breaking of unnecessary limitations of thought and action, the detection and correction of erroneous theories and actions, the perfection of skill, the enlargement of their purposes, and uplifting of thought, ideals, hope, energy and endeavor.

The best is yet to be! Are you increasing your ability to appreciate it and take part in it, or are you merely passing your time away?

IDEAS

WHO can measure the value of an idea? Starting as the bud of an acorn it becomes at last a forest of mighty oaks; or beginning as a spark it consumes the rubbish of centuries.

Ideas are as essential to progress as a hub to a wheel, for they form the center around which all things revolve. Ideas begin great enterprises, and the workers of all lands do their bidding. Ideas govern the governors, rule the rulers, and manage the managers of all nations and industries. Ideas are the motive power which turn the tireless wheels of toil. Ideas raise the plow-boy to president, and constitute the primal element of the success of men and nations. Ideas form the fire that lights the torch of progress, leading on the centuries. Ideas are the keys which open the storehouses of possibility. Ideas are the passports to the realms of great achievement. Ideas are the touch-buttons which connect the currents of energy with the wheels of history. Ideas determine the bounds, break the limits, move on the goal, and waken latent capacity to successive sunrises of better days.

PIONEER WORK

THE most far-reaching work is that of the pioneer. The voyage of Columbus cost seven thousand dollars—but the history of coming centuries will continue to record the results of that experiment.

Many men would have been willing to endure the hardships and chains of Columbus to have performed so great a service to mankind — if they had known beforehand what the outcome would be. But Columbus and his supporters had no adequate conception of the possibilities of that service. Some things have to be undertaken on faith. Many a trackless ocean has to be crossed in following the lead of our convictions. Every new continent lies overseas.

There are many new worlds yet to be discovered. Printing, steam, electricity, telegraphy, photography, the phonograph, and wireless telegraphy have each opened new worlds. But these are merely hints of the discoveries yet to be made.

Who will discover the new things? The man who looks beneath the surface, who is willing to endure something for the common good, who follows ideas, grasps essentials, analyzes causes; who undertakes anew where hundreds have failed, who peers over precedents, considers fundamentals, tries experiments, proceeds from principles, and is urged on by an earnest purpose.

OPPORTUNITIES THAT WAIT

NAPOLEON could have had an automobile. The principles upon which it is constructed have always existed. If men had known enough to apply those principles then, the best type of modern car might have glided down the streets of Paris a century ago. Hot water made steam back in the Carboniferous Age. Plato might have had a telephone, Alexander a phonograph, Cleopatra a steam yacht, and the speeches of Cicero might have been printed in a daily paper, if men had known enough.

During the coming centuries many inventions will be made — but the principles upon which they are to be constructed are in existence right now, awaiting perception and application. And every improvement that will be made in every line of work — art, manufacture, commerce, agriculture, physics, and metaphysics — will merely be the discovery and unfoldment of facts that exist now.

In the years that are before us we shall all doubtless make significant progress. Each step will come as soon as we really think of it — as soon as we really see the next thing to do and do it. The opportunity to perceive the next step is always open — always waiting to be utilized.

WHERE THE TROUBLE LIES

HARD problems often have an easy solution when you know just where the trouble lies. One cold winter morning I was passing a grocery store and saw a number of people waiting to get in. The man was there to open the door, but the key wouldn't work. With the help of a policeman and one or two of the other men he was trying to force the lock. I joined the crowd for a few moments. One man asked to see the key. He reasoned that if the key had always worked before it should work now unless there was something wrong with it. Looking down the little hole in the end he found a small pebble, which kept the key from going all the way in. Picking out the pebble he put the key in the lock, and opened the door readily.

I have often thought of this experience when confronted by perplexing problems. And many a time I have found that what at first seemed a difficult problem was instantly solved — when I found the pebble in the key.

Somewhere, in every problem, there is a place where the trouble lies. We do not make any progress until we find that spot and remove the obstruction. All other effort is wasted. We gain nothing by trying to force the lock. The thing to do is to find the pebble in the key.

THE LEVER PRINCIPLE

YOUR ability to move things depends largely on where you take hold. I shall never forget the first time I saw the great Ferris wheel — that wonder of two world's fairs. What impressed me most was not its magnitude, but the fact that in spite of its gigantic size, it required only a comparatively small engine to run it. For unlike most wheels the power was not applied at the center, but at the circumference, thus utilizing the extraordinary leverage of one hundred and eighty feet. The same force, if exerted at the axle, would have been powerless to move the wheel a single inch.

The lever principle is not confined to mechanical things — it is one of the great fundamental ideas which humanity has discovered.

When the progress of your campaign is beset with obstacles, whether ignorance, prejudice, injustice, or delay, remember the lever principle. Somewhere there is a move that you can make that will set in motion a chain of events that will eventually move even the greatest obstacle. Don't strain at the hub of the ponderous wheel — move a cog that fits into the rim.

LEARN TO ASK QUESTIONS

HERE is one of the most valuable things you will ever learn: You can save yourself years of effort by utilizing the knowledge and experience of others. What it takes a man ten years to learn may take him only a minute to tell. If you ask him a question that will draw out his convictions, you can get the same thought you would probably reach if you went over the same ground he did. You can, as it were, begin where he left off.

A man spent thirty years perfecting the telephone, but I can pick it up and use it in an instant. If I had to invent one myself before I could use it, I would lose valuable time doing something that has already been done.

Don't ask stupid or impertinent questions, as that would cost you the confidence of the person you ask, and shut off the help he might be willing to render you.

The questions that bring out the most information are specific questions, thoughtfully asked, and sometimes involving fundamentals. It is a good practice to try the different kinds of questions until you learn which are the best. Always remember that asking intelligent questions is an art — a valuable accomplishment.

HOW TO ACQUIRE TACT

It is generally conceded that tact is a quality which serves us well at all times and under all circumstances. And while all regard it as a thing greatly to be desired, many fail to recognize that it may be consciously cultivated. If we analyze tact we find that it is made up of certain elements:

A sympathetic knowledge of human nature, its fears, weaknesses, expectations, and inclinations.

The ability to put yourself in the other person's place and to consider the matter as it appears to him.

The magnanimity to deny expression to such of your thoughts as might unnecessarily offend another.

The ability to perceive quickly what is the expedient thing, and the willingness to make the necessary concessions.

The recognition that there are millions of different human opinions of which your own is but one.

A spirit of unfeigned kindness such as makes even an enemy a debtor to your innate good will.

A patience that supplants accusation with the opportunity for self-discovery.

A recognition of what is customary under the circumstances and a gracious acceptance of the situation.

Gentleness, cheerfulness and sincerity — and such variations as the spirit of these may suggest.

COURTESY: A BUSINESS IDEAL

THERE have been thousands of essays and articles written within the last few years to emphasize the importance of courtesy in the business life. It is to be hoped that there will be thousands more. For it is certain that few things do so much to make the world fit to live in as courtesy.

Many business houses pride themselves on the extent to which courtesy is manifested by their employes, both in dealing with customers and with each other. And almost without exception these firms give openly to their employes the thought that courtesy pays for sound business reasons.

There may be those who look askance at reforms which seem to have only a business motive behind them. But I think it is one of the signs of the times that business men are finding that the common moral principles of life are such mighty factors in business success that they are forced, for business reasons, to encourage such reforms.

There is an ever widening educational propaganda issued by business houses to employes — because it pays. And a digest of a volume of business-house literature reveals the significant fact that at the core of almost every piece of instruction is to be found some restatement of the simplest of common virtues. Courtesy, the thousand-fold topic of business doctrine, is but another name for kindness.

ARE YOU A DIPLOMAT?

THE diplomat holds a high place in business affairs, and it is well to understand what constitutes diplomacy. For, like many other valuable qualities, it may be acquired.

Diplomacy is common sense reduced to a fine art. A diplomat is a man who throws away his cigar when he visits a powder magazine. He slows up as he turns the corner. He speaks cordially to the strange dog. He walks slowly when he is escorting an elderly lady. He speaks concisely when he is talking to a busy man. He never whips the horse pulling steadily up hill. He does not wear his vermilion golf jacket when he visits the stock farm. He always strokes the fur the right way. And in dealing with human nature he makes allowances for conceit, arrogance, and reserve, and does not disturb them when this would only defeat a nobler purpose.

Diplomacy should never be confused with mere cunning, its counterfeit. It is one thing to take an unfair advantage—another to make use of the advantage already yours—the advantage of discretion. The true diplomat is the man who has advanced more than others in the gentle art of getting along with his fellow men.

SELF-IMPROVEMENT

APPRECIATE YOUR CAPACITY

MUCH of the strength within men is hidden, awaiting an occasion to reveal it. The head of a department in a great manufacturing concern severed his connection with the firm, his work falling upon a young man of twenty-five years. The young man rose to the occasion, and in a very short time was conceded to be the stronger executive of the two. He had been with the concern for several years, and was regarded as a bright fellow, but his marked success was a surprise to all who knew him — even to himself.

The fact is, the young man had that ability all the time and didn't know it; and his employers didn't know it. He might have been doing greater things all along if there had been the occasion to reveal his strength.

Do you employers and superior officers in business realize how much of this hidden strength there is in your men? Perhaps a word from you, giving certain men more scope, would liberate that ability for the development of both your business and your men?

Do you workers know your own strength? Are you working up to your capacity? Or are you accepting the limits which the circumstances place about you?

TIME TO THINK

It doesn't pay to be too busy. Unless a man has some time to think in a natural way about things in general he loses a great measure of mental growth. It is well to be active — a wholesome thing for every faculty of the mind. But as trees and flowers need both periods of rain and periods of sunshine, so men need to be sometimes busy and sometimes able to stop and think. Quiet thought is refreshing to the busy man.

A great many men in business do not at all appreciate this fact — however commonplace it may seem. They drive themselves or let themselves be driven by their work all day long, day in and day out, year in and year out. What time they have away from their work is often spent in an endless round of social and pleasurable activities, leaving practically no half hour without its impending purpose, no time to stop and think and set their minds in order, no time to reflect or to let the mind act from impulses other than the purposes with which it is being driven continuously. Such a man's mind gets into a whirl, revolving in a very small orbit and making him oblivious to greater themes that lie wholly outside of the limited circle of his own strenuous activity.

On a strictly business basis, this does not pay. It deprives the man of thoughts and ideas that might open up new opportunities of immeasurable value to his work. Whatever clogs up thinking retards progress.

ARE YOU IN A TREADMILL?

Is the work you are doing to-day essential to your progress, or are you merely keeping at it and passing your time away? Are you getting anywhere? Are you gaining experience that will be of value to you? If you do the same work for another year will you be any better off than you are now?

These vital questions come to every worker. If the answer be "No," then what? Are you doing anything about it? Or are you tramping the treadmill without trying to get out? The answer to these questions measures the real difference between the progressive and the unprogressive man. When the unprogressive man is somewhat aroused he works harder — but in the treadmill. When the progressive man is aroused and finds himself in a treadmill he spends his first efforts to get out — and doesn't stop until he is out.

If you are working in a treadmill, and you know it is a treadmill, and that you could do better work, why don't you do something about it? Why don't you make some effort to get out? And when you seek advice, don't let some easy-going optimistic friend talk you into a false hope about the treadmill. Find the next step out — and take it.

CONTINUOUS GROWTH NECESSARY

ARE you growing as fast as your business is growing? That is a question every man might well ask himself. Unless there is a continual growth in the individual there is a widening of the distance between him and the higher positions to which he aspires. The requirements of nearly all high positions are increasing. It takes a bigger man to be foreman or manager to-day than it did a few years ago.

In many lines of business it is not uncommon to double the business of the previous year, while an increase of from twenty to fifty per cent is often considered a normal growth.

Are you growing as fast as your business is growing? This question comes home with especial significance to men who have executive work of any kind. The foreman who handled ten men two years ago, and twenty men last year, is this year perhaps required to handle forty men. He must be able to do it if he is to keep up with his position. The business demands the forty men — if he can't handle them another must. The call everywhere is for men who can keep up with the rapid pace of business development.

ABILITY IS CAPITAL

A GOOD way to get a proper view of a salary is to compare it with the interest on money invested. If the average conservative investment be at 5 per cent, then a man whose personal efforts warrant a salary of \$1,500 a year has the same income he would have if he had \$30,000 invested. If he gets an increase of \$500 a year he has increased his capital 33 per cent and draws an income equal to an invested capital of \$40,000.

Ability without money-capital is better than money without ability. The progressive man is often able to increase his earning capacity more than the man of money without ability could hope to increase his capital in the same length of time. If a man getting \$30 a week, improves his ability so as to get \$40, as the result of a year's improvement, he has made a living and virtually cleared \$10,000 to add to his capital. Some business enterprises with \$30,000 invested would be considered prosperous if they could do as well.

The opportunity for self-improvement is in some degree open to every man. The salaried man who has big ideas as to what he would do if he were at the head of a business of his own would do well to consider his ability as his business, with a capital of twenty times his annual salary, and so utilize all his good intentions in the effort to improve his talent by practicing on the business in which he is now engaged.

THE RELIABLE MAN

THERE is always room for the man who can be relied upon. "Why do you look outside your own business to find a man for that place?" asked one business man of another who had stated that he was looking for a man.

"Well, the truth is," replied the other, "the kind of man I want isn't to be found among our 700 employes. I have always believed in promoting our own men when we have the right ones to promote. But I want a man who can be relied upon. I can't stand over that work all the time to coach some fellow who may be able to do the detail if I will do the thinking for him. And I can't afford to put in a fairly capable man who is likely to do some erratic thing the first time I give him enough leeway. What I need, and what I must have, is a man who can take that department and run it without too much watching. Of course any man I get will need a few pointers now and then while he is getting in touch with our way of doing business. And I want a man who can take advice when I see fit to give it, and who knows enough to come to me for advice when he needs it. But I can't afford to waste time, money and business opportunity coaching a man who can't be depended upon. I want some one I can lean on, and not some one who will lean on me. Do you know where I can find such a man?"

"Yes," replied the other, "there are several such men around town, but they have already been discovered, and I am afraid you will find it hard to get one."

ARE YOU WAITING TO BE TOLD?

A FAULT excused to-day will go unnoticed to-morrow, and an outward blemish often betrays an inward carelessness. One day a merchant was passing through his store and noticed some badly soiled gum tags on a tableful of china plates. He asked for the manager of the department and called his attention to the tags.

“Oh, yes,” said the man, “I’ll change them right away.”

“But,” said the merchant, “that is not the point at all. A boy can change them when he is told. What bothers me is not those gum tags, but the fact that you and a dozen other people in this department have seen these soiled gum tags every day for weeks, and not one of you has thought to change them. And if you let things go which are so conspicuously wrong, what assurance have I that you are not letting a hundred other things go at loose ends which I cannot know about unless I come in here and do your work over after you? I don’t pay you a salary to change gum tags when some one else tells you, but to know when the gum tags ought to be changed, and to teach your assistants to know when they ought to be changed, and to change them without being told even by you.”

Are you waiting to be told to do the duty that stands plainly before your eyes?

LEARN WHILE YOU CAN

KNOWLEDGE and skill are always wise investments. One of the most foolish notions young men sometimes get is that accomplishments for which they have no present need are of no value to them. I know a young man who had a most excellent opportunity to learn to use the typewriter. His work didn't require the knowledge and he let the opportunity pass — even though urged to spend his unoccupied time in the office in practicing. Later he came to a place where that knowledge would have given him a desirable promotion, but he had to see the work go to another.

The progressive man is always seeking to equip himself for higher work — even though the opportunity to use the knowledge is not apparent at the time.

Few investments are so sure and profitable as the effort to equip oneself in the four fundamental accomplishments:

- (1) How to think accurately and comprehensively,
- (2) How to express thought in talking and writing,
- (3) How to work skillfully with the hands,
- (4) How to take one's place among men.

Out of these accomplishments grow the highest forms of human activity — commerce, manufacture, art; executive ability, productive power, salesmanship; literature, music, drama; reputation, skill, and character.

GET A BROAD VIEW

A KNOWLEDGE of the whole plan enables one to handle a part more intelligently. In a great mail order establishment every new employe is allowed from one to three weeks to get acquainted with the entire system of handling orders — from the time the letter is received until the goods are packed and loaded into the freight cars. No matter what line of work a new employe is to be engaged in, it is considered important for him to know the whole process of the business.

Many workers are content to know merely their own part of the work, and never give a thought to know what is going on in other departments of the same business. This necessarily limits their range of view and makes them in some degree less valuable. It is this very attitude that often keeps men doing one thing all their lives.

The right spirit is that shown by the man who wants to know all he can about all parts of the business as well as all about his own work. To have some conception of the business as a whole enables a man to work in harmony with the purposes of his employer, and to carry out the spirit as well as the letter of his instructions. This must eventually tell in the quality of the man's work, and so affect his standing and progress.

FROM ACORN TO OAK

SOME of the greatest business enterprises have grown out of very simple ideas. In many such cases the secret of success is merely in doing an old thing in a new way.

Many years ago a man got the idea of selling goods to merchants in assortments instead of leaving it to the merchants to pick out each individual item of their stock. He began by selling twenty-dollar assortments of notions. The idea appealed to the merchants, and the business prospered, until to-day it has surpassed the most extravagant dreams of its founder.

Another idea that grew out of this one has also gained extraordinary dimensions. The success of the "5 and 10 cent counters" gave another man the idea of the "5 and 10 cent stores," and that idea grew until he possessed a chain of hundreds of such stores all over the country.

Another idea that began in a small way and has reached vast proportions in various lines of trade is the factory that sells directly to the consumer.

It is hardly possible that all the big fundamental ideas of this kind have been thought of at this time. Successes just as great are doubtless waiting for men who can think of other ideas — ideas that will serve a widespread need.

STUDY FOR THE PLACE AHEAD

AN hour a day spent in study will do wonders for almost any man. After a man has worked hard all day he may not feel like studying. The natural tendency is towards complete relaxation, and it is not to be denied that a certain amount of relaxation has its distinctive value. But it is also certain that most men waste some time every day — a few hours a week at least, which if spent in the right kind of study would equip them to greatly increase their earning capacity, and perhaps attain a position where life has more opportunities and larger compensations.

I heard of a man who advanced himself from \$35 a month to \$125 a month in two years' time by studying a correspondence course in certain technical branches when his day's work was done. Another young man is drawing five times as much salary as he did two years ago, because he spent part of his evenings studying draftsmanship. A successful architect gained his start by studying in his spare time while he was serving a term at hard labor in the penitentiary.

For men employed at certain kinds of work a little daily study is a pleasant recreation. It is often more restful than many other pastimes. Studying to equip oneself for a higher position ought to be a refreshing diversion for any man. It is the chief avenue of escape from a non-progressive and unsatisfactory life.

A GREAT ART

THE art of talking is one of the most valuable equipments a business man can have. Nearly all work that is above mere routine and physical labor involves talking, and the success of the work often depends on the ability to carry the point in conversation. The difference between a skilled and unskilled talker is very great. The importance of knowing how to talk well is not generally appreciated. Many who think they are proficient in the art are as self-deceived as the novice in poetry writing. A really skillful talker is rare, because little or no systematic attention is paid to cultivating the art. Instead of being allowed to develop in a haphazard manner, picking up a point here and another there, talking should be the subject of study almost as thoroughly as that given to painting, writing, or music.

A man may have good ideas, but if he does not know how to present them intelligently they may never attain proper recognition. If a man would acquire information from others he must know how to draw them out. The difference between a good salesman and a poor one is often a matter of knowing how to talk. And the manager who gets the most out of his men is the one who knows how to talk to them in a manner that will stir their enthusiasm, quickening and encouraging them to put forth their best efforts. At every turn the art of talking is a vital factor in success.

THE MEN OF TO-MORROW

LACK of success is largely the fruit of wasted opportunity. The men who will be most actively engaged in business affairs a few years hence are to-day going to school. The average young man in school does not in any practical degree appreciate what the business world will require of him. For lack of that knowledge many young men now in school are wasting opportunities as recklessly as the man of sudden wealth who lights a cigar with a twenty dollar bill. Opportunities that in a few years money cannot buy are daily and hourly thrown away by young men with a prodigality that saddens every business man who has come to realize what such opportunities would have meant to himself and others.

A million unsuccessful men in business life call out in admonition to the young man who is not making the most of his opportunities to-day. A million homes of want and vain regret cry out to the teachers in schools and colleges, beseeching them to labor assiduously to imbue their pupils with right ideas of work, education, and purpose. But louder still is the cry that goes out to parents, whose children are to enter the arena of the world's activity, imploring them to labor systematically and patiently, to teach their boys and girls to love work for work's sake, and to love knowledge for the good it can bring — and to use every opportunity to the utmost.

NOT COUNTING THE TIME

I WAS looking at a beautiful cloisonne vase in an art ware store, examining its intricate workmanship, and marveling at its price — only two dollars for a splendid piece of work that must have taken a skilled craftsman many days to produce.

“How is it possible to make such a thing for that price?” I asked the salesman.

“Those Japanese,” he explained, “don’t count their time as a part of the cost; they are satisfied to make a little profit on the materials they use.”

I couldn’t help thinking that there are many others who do not count their time as part of the cost. Almost everybody wastes time — and without having anything useful or beautiful to show for it. Even many busy men waste time. And if they do it, what shall we say of those who are less busy; and what, indeed, of those who are not busy at all?

Did you ever try saying to yourself, “My time is worth a dollar an hour. Would I pay a dollar an hour for this puttering?” That’s a fair test. Every hour of your time is a portion of your life’s opportunity, and should be worth something to you and others.

“ I S E E N ”

THOUSANDS of men are classed below their natural level because they use poor grammar. Two business men were discussing the proposed promotion of a young man. The senior partner said: “We can’t trust him to meet our customers. He always says ‘I seen.’” And the young man did not get the appointment.

Many a man has been shut off from the society of those who might help him, solely because his careless habits of speech offended their more refined sensibilities. Whether this attitude on their part is right or not, does not alter the fact that such is the tendency, and this shows how the question of correct speech may be a factor in a person’s career.

The habit of speaking incorrectly is not easily overcome, but no one, no matter at what age in life, should rest content until he has overcome it. But first of all must be rooted out the chief obstacle to progress, the ignorant and self-justifying belief that it really makes no difference how you speak if people understand you. On this little rock there has been many a shipwreck, both in social and in business life.

There are thousands of boys growing up in offices and other departments of business who are bright and energetic and give promise of successful careers — but they use bad grammar, and are fastening the habit upon themselves as they grow older. What a blessing it would be to those boys if the educated men and women around them would encourage them to study and use the correct forms of expression! It would tell mightily on their careers.

THE WORD TO THE WISE

MANY a young man loses an opportunity by not heeding the casual recommendations of his employer. There are a good many things an employer can recommend, but does not feel in a position to require. These suggestions for the good of the employe are often given very simply, but are none the less valuable. They are often the fruit of wide experience, and are merely a sample of what the employer would like to do in that way if his suggestions were properly received.

A manager said to me, "I was greatly surprised recently. I started a young man in my office, and as he seemed open-minded and anxious to learn I took the trouble to tell him a few things for his own good. One thing I suggested was that he read 'Calumet K,' and another was that he watch his chance and practice on the typewriter. During his extra time at noon on the first day I saw him busy at the typewriter, and the next day he came in with the book under his arm."

"And what was the surprise?"

"That he actually did what I suggested. So many young men will do what they are ordered to do, but if you give them a mere suggestion they will pay no attention to it. I hardly expected him to do anything about either of the things I mentioned, because I have had lots of experience with young men. But it is encouraging once in a while to find an exception to the rule."

LEARN TO BE THOROUGH

ONE of the universal faults is a lack of thoroughness. From the boy who copies his arithmetic lesson from a schoolmate's paper to the old man who leaves ambiguities in his will for the heirs to quibble over, there is a lack of thoroughness in nearly every human transaction. The unwritten motto of the average person is, "To seem and not to be." Most people are willing to let well enough alone — and they have a modest standard of what constitutes "well enough."

It is because of the wide prevalence of this fault that the really thorough man both does and does not get the credit that is due him. He usually does not get it when his work is superficially judged by those who are themselves not thorough. But he does get it when his work is put to the test or is fairly compared. And, best of all, he has the satisfaction of knowing for himself that he has done his duty, and therefore has gained a point of self-discipline which he can never really lose.

The man who aspires to rise above the average in any line of endeavor should ponder well this point: The average person is not thorough, and therefore even a little thoroughness will surpass him. This should inspire the ambitious man to be thorough. And he will soon find that thoroughness practically measures the difference between the average and the highly successful man.

PRACTICE-WORK

I WAS talking with a business man about the success of a well-known manufacturer — now many times a millionaire.

“I knew him when he was a boy,” said the man. “The first thing I can remember was that he beat me at a game of checkers. We played four games and he beat me every time. I remember it well. But he was that way about everything. He was the best ball player, the best skater, the best tennis player — the best in everything he went into. In school it was the same way. I remember one time he got only third place in the Latin class. He made capital out of the fact, though, for he went at that Latin as if his life depended on it, and that’s about the last time I ever heard of anybody getting ahead of him. After he got in business it was the same way. Nobody ever accused him of doing things by halves. It’s no wonder to me that he got rich, and I believe he earned every dollar of his money by doing everything a little bit better than the next person.”

Everything we do is merely practice-work for something greater, and we grow in capacity in the proportion that we throw our best efforts into whatever we undertake.

WORKING FOR YOURSELF

It is always a helpful thought for an employe to go about his work, not with the thought that he is working solely for his employer, but that he is really working for himself.

“I always tell an employe,” said a merchant, “that he is working for himself just as much as if his name were over the door. We furnish him capital, space to work in, and give him the benefit of our systems of handling merchandise, and all that, but what he does is in a sense his own business. If he sells goods, or packs them for shipment, or makes out bills, whatever he does contributes toward a portion of the net receipts of the store. He is entitled to what he actually earns, minus what he pays for rent, capital and other accessories. If he does well his business will grow and he will get the benefit of it. And if he does not do well he will make a failure of his business — just as if he were closed up by his creditors. We can’t give him room if he won’t pay his rent, or pay interest on the capital we lend him, and so he has to go out of business. In many ways he is virtually in business for himself, and will stand or fall on his own efforts.”

If this idea were more thoroughly understood by employes everywhere it would do away with a great deal of the desire to shirk and pretend, and would inspire each one to put forth his best efforts.

HEADED FOR THE TOP

RESOURCEFULNESS is the star accomplishment. It is the master-key that fits all the locks of business requirements.

I recently heard a good story about an office boy—may his tribe increase! He took the “message to Garcia” and got it there on time.

The boy was given a letter to be delivered to a man at his home that evening, and was told that it was very important that the man should have the letter before 8 o'clock. When he got there “Garcia” had gone out, his family did not know where. The boy asked where he might possibly be and they couldn't even guess. Then he asked for the names of two or three of the man's most intimate friends. When these were given he made haste to the nearest telephone and explained the situation to one or two of the friends and got them to guess where he was. Then he telephoned to one of the guesses and found that Garcia had just been there but had gone out with the man of the house, and his family didn't know where. But they made a good guess, which proved true. The boy got Garcia on the telephone at a clubhouse two miles away and explained that it was now five minutes to 8, and asked permission to tear open the letter and read it to him. This the man agreed to, and received the information just in time to enable him to be present at an important meeting.

THE RIGHT TRACK

MANY persons are trying hard to do work they are not "cut out for," while perhaps a greater measure of success awaits them in some more congenial line.

A young man was working in the stock room of an electrical supply house at a salary of eight dollars a week. He seemed energetic and in earnest, but out of place, and was dismissed. Three months later, after another change or two, he was employed as an artist on certain kinds of commercial work, at three times his former salary. Within a year he was making good progress in his work and receiving forty dollars a week.

I often wonder how many undiscovered artists there are working in stock rooms — and how many good stock keepers there are struggling with art.

Too little attention is paid to finding just the right work. Young men often start in a business because a friend works there, or because a relative offers a position. They are often advised to take the first position they can find and work up.

While a certain variation of experience often fits a man peculiarly for a later work, it is usually desirable that he should seek as directly as possible for the one line in which he is most likely to make a success.

Are you really suited to the work you are in? Ask yourself that question.

PICKING THE WAY

LACK of experience should not deter a man from undertaking new work if he is reasonably sure of himself and has plenty of initiative and adaptability. I know a young man who made a success keeping books, although he took charge of the work when he had no experience whatever. He asked questions until he got a good general idea of the work. Then he worked along cautiously until he came to something he did not understand, when he went again for advice. By taking no step without first making sure it was the right one, he made no serious blunders, and soon became competent to carry on the work alone.

Some men, finding themselves engaged in work that promises no future, desire a change, but are afraid to undertake a new line in which they have had no experience, clinging rather to the lines they are familiar with. It is, of course, unwise to get into deep water until you know how to swim. But the facts are that the fear to undertake new work is often groundless, for the simple reason that all work, except that requiring technical knowledge, is pretty much the same everywhere — that is, a man can usually find out what there is to do, how it should be done, and then do it. The work that looks hard when it is unfamiliar is often seen to be very easy when you know how.

Where a foundation of technical training is requisite, it is seldom easy to work into a new line successfully. The chemist's assistant who has not studied chemistry finds a gulf he cannot cross. But with books and tutors even technical training has been acquired in that way.

UNFOLDING A TASK

MOST questions settle themselves when you have all the necessary information at hand, and by attaining one step the next becomes plain. Many persons fear to undertake projects which they might easily perform, simply because they cannot see the end from the beginning, and are not willing to work their way along.

The fact is, most of the great works in the world have been undertaken by men who did not pretend to be able to see the end from the beginning; but they did know that questions which look perplexing at a distance become clearer when you get up to them.

Suppose a man is to erect a great office building. The size of his lot determines that he shall not build larger than a certain space. The value of the land determines that none of it shall go to waste. The purpose of the building helps to determine the height. The number of steel beams is fixed by the dimensions already established — across the side nine would not be enough, eleven would be too many, leaving ten as the logical number. The price of materials and the money the man is willing to spend determine whether it will be brick, terra-cotta, or granite. The purpose of the building will decide many minor features, such as entrances, stairways and windows. At every point the question to decide usually settles itself when all the facts are considered. Perceiving this principle of unfoldment ought to encourage the fearful to undertake any reasonable work without fear.

THROUGH OTHER EYES

THE man who is willing to be told comes nearest seeing himself as others see him. If a man steps up to you and says, "Beg pardon, but there's some dust on your coat," you instinctively turn and say, "Thank you, sir." But, if, in the same spirit of helpfulness, he attempts to show you how your actions or policies look to other people, he is not always assured of a grateful reception.

There is no man who does not at times need a sidelight on what he is doing. And the man who does not care what others think, but goes ahead to carry out the ideas that may suggest themselves to him, is often the man who makes the most serious mistakes. It is one thing to have a wholesome measure of self-reliance, and another thing to keep yourself out of the reach of the casual counsel of friends. Being open to counsel does not mean that you are under obligations to act upon it if contrary to your honest convictions, but it means that you have the advantage of the viewpoints of others. Many a man has been saved from unfortunate business alliances, untimely actions and unnecessary complications because his friends felt free to go to him with their criticisms.

THE FORCE OF ILLUSTRATION

EVERY business man would do well to cultivate the use of illustrations and anecdotes in his conversation. Success in convincing another often depends on how clear you can make your point.

Two men were discussing a proposed expenditure. One wanted to spend \$500 and get the best in the market. The other wanted to skim a little and bring the bill down to \$475. He argued that the effect would be substantially the same, and the \$25 would be saved. But the first man said:

“Suppose you were giving a big dinner to a number of your friends, and should try to save a little by giving them five oysters instead of six. You might save the cost of a few oysters, and yet lose credit for the whole dinner. Your friends would notice the shortage, even if there was an abundance of other good things, and would be likely to think more of your closeness on that point than of your generosity in giving the dinner.”

The order went through for the full amount.

It is equally important, however, to be able to detect faulty application of an illustration, so as not to be deceived by it. A razor may be a fine thing to shave with, but a dangerous plaything for children.

ALL BUSINESS AKIN

A WELL-ROUNDED business man is like an artist. The artist can paint a picture of a man, a house, a horse, a sunset, or a range of mountains. He may specialize on one class of subjects, as animals or portraits, but he can undertake any of the others with some assurance of success. A business man who is thoroughly grounded in the fundamentals of business procedure is usually able to take hold of almost any kind of a business and conduct it successfully.

“To what extent is a knowledge of music necessary in your business?” I asked a man connected with a large musical instrument company.

“Everybody asks that question,” he said. “The fact is that we have very few musicians either in our factory or salesrooms. What we need is business men, craftsmen, and salesmen. The men who test the instruments need musical knowledge, but they are about the only ones who do need it. A man doesn’t have to be a musician to make a brass horn any more than he does to make a brass fixture for an electric light. The superintendent of a musical instrument factory might just as ably oversee an automobile factory. A salesman doesn’t have to be a painter to sell pictures, nor a writer to sell books, nor a cook to appreciate the quality of a cake.”

This thought ought to be reassuring to the man who finds it advisable to change his line of business or add to it. The gulf between one kind of business and another is often not so wide as it seems.

THE CONTAGION OF LITTLENESS

MANY a man of natural ability has been stunted by working under a man of small caliber. I knew a promising young man who came near being ruined in this way. He first had a broad-minded employer who gave him plenty of hard and wholesome work to do, and let him do it his own way. He developed initiative, resource, and self-reliance, and shouldered responsibility easily. Then the business was sold and a new manager came. The work quickly changed. The new manager required every detail to be submitted for his approval, and gave minute instructions on points which had always been left to the judgment of the individual workers.

The young man was forced, by his manager's own littleness, to give up his own resource and initiative, and accept the other's ideas. He fell into the habit of thinking, not how the work should be done, but how the manager's fancy might dictate. He quit studying the business and began to study the whims of the manager. His progress stopped and he became miserable. A friend finally pointed out to him the truth of the situation, and he sought a position with another firm. Here he again became a man of initiative, judgment, and resource. But he narrowly escaped lapsing into littleness through association with a little-minded man.

BETTING A MILLION TO ONE

I OFTEN think how much dishonesty could be checked if the beginner in it could get one idea — if he could be made to stop long enough to consider it even as a poor bet — if he has no higher standard to appeal to. If I could talk to one such person I would say: “Why is it that you take property that does not belong to you? Is it not because you think you will gain something? If it could be proven to you that you would gain nothing, would you have any desire to do it? No man willingly goes into a losing game. Suppose you get caught — you will readily agree that you have gained nothing. Suppose you are not caught — you only get a stronger notion that you could do it again and not get caught. The more you do it the more bold you get until some day — sure as can be — you will get caught. Then you lose everything, all you seem to have gained, and, more than that, you lose respectability, self-respect, and liberty. The odds are heavily in favor of your getting caught. If you gamble, would you stake your liberty and manhood against a few dollars? That’s virtually what you do when you are dishonest in any degree — like betting a million to one.

“But there is a far higher reason than fear of punishment which should impel you to turn back now and do right. Right doing leads to all that is worth having in the world. It is all that can satisfy. You know what is right — and you risk nothing but have everything to gain by doing right.”

THE DANGER OF PERSONAL INFLUENCE

THERE is always one right step to be taken — and perhaps several possible wrong ones.

A young man who wished to obtain a position with a certain railroad said to an influential friend:

“Your house is a large shipper with that road, and a request from you ought to have weight in getting me in there.”

“Now, see here,” said the friend, “do you know just how your career ought to work out — just where you ought to be this year, and where next year, so as to fully develop your latent capacity?”

“No,” said the young man. “I don’t think anyone knows that.”

“Well then,” said the friend, “here you come, at one of the most critical points of your career, and ask to have yourself forced into certain channels of life whether you belong there or not. You are willing to let the mere chance of personal influence guide you at this time, when the least erroneous move might change the course of your whole life. What you should do is to seek diligently to find what is exactly the right step for you to take at this time. You can’t afford to have your future thwarted by getting a wrong start.”

The young man has never ceased to be grateful that he didn’t get the railroad position, for events proved that his friend was right.

HOW FRIENDS MAY LIMIT US

A MAN is sometimes harmed more than helped by his friends, especially if they hedge him in with their notions of what he ought to do. Whenever he tries to step outside those limits he runs into their admonitions and is turned back into the ruts.

“Some years ago,” said a successful business man, “I got down in the world. I had given up a line of business that was unsatisfactory as a life work and did not lead anywhere. In the year or two that followed I was searching for some line that had a future in it for me. When I discovered that what I had was not the right thing I lost no time in looking for something else. My friends did not understand my plan at all, and saw only the changes I had made. They began to advise me to settle down, stick to what I had, and work up from there. They did not throw any light on my problem, but only confused me with their positive advice. After a period of unusually hard luck I came to the conclusion that the main trouble was too much advice — good, kind, sympathetic advice, but pernicious in its effect on my career. So I resolved to make a bold stroke and get out of the reach of my friends. I moved to a distant city, and began anew according to my own standards, unhampered by what others thought I was fitted for. And I have prospered steadily from that day to this.”

MAKE SOME NEW FRIENDS

DON'T get into the habit of going to the same places and in the same company all the time. I knew two men who sat in the same office all day long, and yet, always took their luncheon together. One of them seldom went anywhere without the other. I do not think this is the best plan. They may get a good deal from each other's company, but they certainly lose much by not associating, part of the time, with other men. I would not care to dine with the same man every day, even if he were the brightest one of his kind.

Noon is a good time for business men to get new thoughts — but many of them do not make the most of the opportunity. I believe in a luncheon to-day, a library to-morrow, an art gallery next day, a visit to some business establishment the next, and so on — sometimes alone, sometimes with a friend, sometimes with a party.

If you are in a rut, try this plan. Get out of the beaten track for an hour or so every day and see how much it will broaden you. Cultivate the acquaintance of men who are getting out of the ruts themselves — the men who are open-minded, progressive, and worth while.

“SEEING THINGS”

It pays to get out and see things. Many a man applies himself so closely to his own business that he knows nothing of what is going on in the big mercantile or manufacturing establishment two blocks away. He may spend days or weeks trying to work out some problem of business organization or the like, thinking perhaps he is a pioneer in that field, when as a matter of fact the same problem has been most happily solved by a dozen concerns within walking distance.

Many men regret that they cannot travel more in order to see things and get new ideas. And yet they do not use the opportunities at their feet. They live for years in plain sight of establishments where there is much to learn by merely going inside of them. An hour or two some noon, or some afternoon, would furnish sights just as new and perhaps just as helpful, as if they were found a thousand miles away.

Many good ideas can be adapted from one kind of business to another. A shirtmaker may learn something from an iron foundry, and a paint manufacturer may learn valuable things in a dry goods store or a piano factory. It is always interesting and helpful to see things in the process of manufacture. It takes away the mystery of common things, and at the same time adds interest to them. It opens up the mind and gives it something concrete to think about.

THE VALUE OF TRAVEL

A CERTAIN amount of travel means as much to a business man as a pinch of salt does to a piece of meat.

"I haven't had a vacation in four years," said one business man to another. "There are always so many things here that require my attention that I haven't been able to see my chance to get away from one year's end to the next."

"That's not it," said the other. "The fact is that you get in a rut and don't know it. You don't get far enough away from your work to get the right perspective. If you could go away for a few weeks you could look back and laugh at some of these little things that you have allowed to chain you down here for four years. When you get far enough away big things look little, and when you get too close to little things they look big."

"Yes, I know," said the first, "but my work is different."

"Not a bit of it," protested the other. "I used to think that myself, but once I had to take a trip for sad personal reasons, and I discovered that the world really went on about the same. Since then I have frequently taken a trip and it always puts new vigor into my work. I begrudge neither time nor money spent in the right kind of travel."

USE YOUR WASTEBASKET MORE

DID you ever see a man's desk piled high with papers and things, the pigeon-holes crammed full, and running over? Do you know what the trouble is? It is this: He keeps a lot of things he ought to put in the wastebasket. He keeps them because he thinks he will want them some day, and is afraid to throw them away. If he would look squarely at every paper that comes to his desk, and decide then and there as to its actual value, he could throw away a great deal of stuff and never miss it.

Few causes contribute so much to encourage a habit of indecision as keeping old things because you don't want to make up your mind to dispose of them. A man who saves too many old things gets stopped up mentally, because every paper he puts away has a thought in his mind to correspond with it, which says, "Some day I'm going to do something about that paper." An accumulation of such intentions is not wholesome; it distracts the mind from present work.

If you are like that, use your wastebasket more. If you know a man like that, help him to see the point. He will thank you some day.

WHEN LETTERS ARE COMPARED

To know how to write a good business letter is a very important thing. I was in the office of a prominent business man one morning and found him looking over his mail. He had advertised for a bright young man as assistant in one of the departments of his business.

"These tell their own story," he said, handing over for my inspection a bunch of about thirty letters. "I know I don't want to see any of these fellows, because I can tell from their letters that they don't know the first principles of good business."

"But you might find some good raw material among them, some one you could break in," I suggested.

"Perhaps I could," he said. "But why should I? Here are four good letters that show the right idea. I am going to see these young men first, and unless I am greatly mistaken I shall find the one I want among them."

I looked again at the thirty letters. It was easy to see why he had thrown them aside. They were unbusiness-like, carelessly composed, and poorly penned. One requested an interview without answering a single question asked in the advertisement. Another gave a seven-page autobiography. One letter was on the back of a blank form. All the applicants showed more or less ignorance of how to write an effective letter, and so lost even a chance at the opportunity offered.

MEASURING EXPERIENCE

A YEAR of experience means much or little according as we have gained one point a day or one a month.

Did you ever hear the story of the young man who met the girl at a New Year's reception? He talked with her for three minutes that day, saw her again in two weeks and talked for five minutes, and saw her at intervals of a week or two until the first of April. Then he said to himself, "I've known that girl for three months." As a matter of fact, adding all the periods of conversation together, he had spent but thirty minutes in her company. Another man met the same girl at the same time, but at the end of the first week he had spent a total of ten hours with her — just twenty times as long as the other man had in three months.

Some men learn a business just like that — some learn more in a week than others in three months. But a "year's experience" is credited up to both when twelve months have rolled by.

When you count your years of experience, consider also the gait you have traveled.

OUR DAILY WORK SACRED

It is pleasing to think that all wholesome work, which serves the need of mankind, is a sacred task. Not long ago a delivery man brought to my home an easy chair which I had purchased. I was impressed with the solicitude he showed in delivering it at the promised time, and the interest he took in his work.

But why not? Why should any honorable work ever be other than interesting? What is our duty to do should be to us a sacred work. In bringing me that chair that man had played a part in the great drama of distribution. If there had been no one to do that work, I should have been deprived of the comfort the chair gave me, and will give me for years to come. And the salesman, the dealer, the railroad man, the furniture maker, and the lumberman — all these would have lost a measure of the reward for their service.

It was a good work to deliver that chair, and it opened the channels through which many were blessed.

Is your work something that in the end blesses your fellow men? Then count that work sacred, and do it with all your heart. Feel something of that enthusiasm which is always associated with a noble work.



ABOUT METHODS



PULLING TOGETHER AS ONE

UNITY of purpose and action is very essential to the full success of any business. Dissension is always a serious handicap. I know a firm of three men who conduct a successful financial business. Their method of handling important questions is worthy of the consideration of the officers of almost every firm. When a proposition comes up, they get together and talk it over from all points of view. Then, although there are but three of them, they cast a formal ballot for "yes" or "no." Each man is required to register his individual conviction of the matter without knowing definitely how the others are to vote. The right action, instead of personal authority, is what they desire. If the vote is divided there is further discussion until the conclusion is unanimous. When an important branch of the general plan is reached another vote is taken as before.

This method has many advantages. It throws the entire energy of the three men in one direction. It tends to prevent one man from giving up his convictions just to keep peace with a more aggressive member. It prevents pouting, pulling back, standing aloof, criticising, and in other ways discouraging those who are carrying out the plan. It insures unity of action, and engenders a spirit of helpful co-operation which permeates the entire staff of assistants entrusted with carrying out the details of the work.

CO-OPERATION

THE strength of unity is indisputable. Few things do more to retard the natural progress of a business or a movement than a lack of intelligent co-operation.

The energy expended on a "tug of war" is not constructive energy. It is like one man pumping water out of a basin while another pumps it back.

There are two chief reasons for a lack of co-operation: One is that men do not agree on what is best to be done. The other is that selfish motives deceive men into thinking that they can get more by going alone.

The remedy for the first is comparison of views, exchange of ideas, and the establishment of the right idea in the minds of all. The remedy for the second is the knowledge that the common good is also the real good of the individual. Selfishness is often but another name for ignorance. If a man desires to obtain the most good for himself he should know that his legitimate share of a great common good is greater than any possible good he could obtain for himself alone. The narrow-minded man fishes with a hook and thinks to have the whole catch for himself. The broad-minded man joins with others in using a seine — and his portion of the catch exceeds by far what he might get with the hook.

Co-operation is the most effective way to secure the most of what each one desires to obtain.

NEWNESS INEVITABLE

CONSERVATISM is often merely a polite name for being in a rut. There is, of course, a sane conservatism that is progressive but cautious — the opposite of impulsive experimentation. But there is also a conservatism that sticks to the beaten track because the groove is worn so deep it is hard to get over the edges.

Things move swiftly these days. Along with increasing speed in transportation and communication the whole motion of the world's activity has been accelerated. Theories which have bound the world for decades and centuries are parting like ropes of sand. Methods are outgrown every season. Last year's automobile is a back number beside this season's model. The public is rapidly becoming educated in many things. Competition is growing keener. Few, indeed, are the conditions that remain untouched by this spirit of change.

It is a matter of vital importance to recognize these changing conditions, otherwise we are liable to be following outgrown methods while priding ourselves on our "conservatism." This is the lesson that many of the large and old-established business houses are learning—that the world is demanding something new every minute, and that it is turning to those who will supply it. Precedents are giving way before progressiveness.

DON'T SPLIT HAIRS

THE stickler often defeats himself; and much that passes for defense of a principle is merely a little personal opinion. An eastern railroad at one time sent a great many cars over a certain western road. One day it filed a claim for seven dollars against the western road, and that road did its best to keep the money. The correspondence lasted four years — the eastern road prolonged it just for fun, to see how far the other road would carry it. But in the meantime it quit sending cars that way. Finally a representative of the traffic department called to ask why his line didn't get the business it used to get. For an answer the officer of the eastern road brought out a pile of correspondence six inches high and placed it on the table before him. "That," he said, "is the result of our effort to collect a claim of seven dollars from your road. We quit sending cars your way four years ago."

Then the two men figured out how much that piece of stickling had cost the western road in four years. It amounted to over \$8,000.

It is one thing to stand your ground when a real principle is involved, and another thing to carry your contention beyond all reason. Good will is sometimes worth more than petty satisfaction.

KEEP YOUR PROMISES

NEGLECTING the exact terms of a definite promise is often a serious thing. The complicated activities of business make it necessary to work to a schedule, and even a little delay at one point may interrupt the whole plan.

A man has an appointment with two other men at 3 o'clock — he has given his word that he will be there, and they have made plans based on that promise. Before he leaves his office it is necessary that he approve a piece of printing that is ready for the press. The printer has faithfully promised to have the proof at his office by 2 o'clock. But 2 o'clock comes and the proof is not there. The printer is informed by telephone and says it will come right away. At five minutes to 3 it has not come. The man must either break his word and perhaps seriously interrupt the plans of others, or he must leave without approving the printing, and so delay his own plans. Neither course would have been necessary if the printer had kept his promise, or, failing of his first, had kept his second.

This situation, with variations, is a familiar annoyance in every line of business. Its prevalence, however, does not lessen the dishonor of a broken promise. It ought to be considered as unsavory to have a worthless promise as to have a worthless credit. The satisfactory conduct of business demands that promises be kept or notice promptly given.

GIVE CREDIT FOR IDEAS

I REMEMBER reading a poem once in which certain types of architecture were referred to as "dreams wrought in masonry." This seemed mere poetry at first, but as I think of it now it seems to be the truth.

Take that tall office building yonder, with the light gleaming from every window, tier on tier. All that was once the dream of one man. Before the first stone was laid, before the architect's plans were drawn, there was a time when one man said to another, "Let us put up a great building there." And before that first audible expression the building existed only as an idea, a thought, or I might say, a dream, in the mind of that man. He walked its corridors when it was still a dream. But now it is a "dream wrought in masonry."

Every building, bridge, railroad, steamship, machine, book, organization, or government in the world — every one — was once an unexpressed thought like that.

Great credit is due those who first conceive the ideas that underlie the world's work.

PERFECTING THE PRODUCT

EVERY progressive manufacturer is continually seeking to make his product better. It is the spirit of the age. This rivalry of excellence is wholesome, and it is a fact of no small significance that competition is coming to be largely a matter of making the best product.

The question naturally presents itself to every manufacturer, "How can I improve my product?"

Certain rules for improvement are comprehensive and almost universally applicable. They are:

(1) Determine by analysis the fundamental elements of the completed product; as size, form, function, substance, appearance.

(2) Conceive an ideal standard in each of these lines.

(3) Compare each element with the ideal standard, and note the specific room for improvement.

(4) Subject each element to exhaustive criticism from the standpoint of the user.

(5) Challenge the elements as to appropriate relationship and individual utility.

(6) Reach a practical compromise between present and ideal conditions.

Thus the elements of a shoe are the sole, the heel, uppers, the last, the leather, the finish. An ideal standard for each according to the kind of shoe, may be conceived; the user's requirements, and harmony of the parts may be considered. The shoe embodying these points perfectly would be the best of its class.

SYSTEMATIC CRITICISM

AFTER a manufactured product is fairly well defined in certain general directions, there is still plenty of room for improvement. The most effective manner of securing this improvement is by criticism of the work from various standpoints. In some form or other this criticism goes on in nearly every manufacturing establishment, but in many of them it is done in a casual rather than in a systematic way.

I heard of a plan the other day that shows one good method of systematic criticism.

“Our business,” said a manufacturer, “is divided into two parts—the manufacturing end and the selling end. The two organizations have different standards to go by. The manufacturing men try to make their product perfect according to mechanical ideas and tests. The selling organization works in the other direction. The salesmen, instead of merely trying to sell what the manufacturing men have produced, class themselves more as outsiders — as dealers and consumers. They virtually buy their goods from the manufacturing department, and insist that the goods shall embody every good idea the dealer or consumer might reasonably desire. The manufacturing men work for the approval of the selling organization, and take great pride in having their work so good that even the most studiously critical salesman can find nothing further to suggest. We find that the plan works well.”

THE LOOKS OF A LETTER

FEW business letters are above criticism. The fact that a letter is a representative of a business is not half appreciated. Occasionally you see a letter that commands your admiration because it is free from flaws. The paper is not too cheap and not too good, the printing, or lithographing, or stamping is well designed and well executed, the type-writing is faultless, the language is good, and the signature readable. Many letters have some of these qualities, but few have all of them at once. There is either cheap paper, or odd colored paper, or awkward typewriting, uneven margins, a diagonal rubber stamp signature, or a letter-head that suggests a circus poster. Any one of these things on an otherwise perfect letter is like a pink cravat on a man in evening clothes.

Individuality in the appearance of a letter is allowable and often desirable, but it is not necessary to transgress the laws of good taste and common sense to attain it. It should be the pride of every business man that his letters command the respect which he himself might wish to command if he took the message in person. A letter often goes as the sole representative of a business, and the impression it gives is the impression the recipient gets of the business.

DOING MORE THAN YOU CAN

NECESSITY is the discoverer of hidden capacity, no less than the "mother of invention." A factory superintendent was telling me that he was turning out 800 dozen a month of an article with the same force and the same equipment that he used to turn out 300 with.

"You must not have been working up to your full capacity before," I said.

"Evidently not," he said. "But we thought we were. I thought so, and the men thought so, and the members of the firm thought so. If anybody had told me we were not doing our very best I should have been offended. But the business began to increase, and the orders kept pouring in, and we got behind, and simply had to do more. With the work crowding in on us, we simply had to organize the work some way to get it done. There wasn't room to put on but a few more men — none to speak of. But we put more speed on the machines, and laid out the work more systematically so as to utilize any waste energy, and the first thing we knew we were actually producing more goods than we had thought it possible to make. It does seem now that we are running at the highest possible capacity. But I suppose if we had to do it we would find some way to increase our present output."

LEAVE WORRY TO THE SYSTEM

IN talking with a man who occupies a high position in a large manufacturing concern I made reference to the weight of responsibility which I considered must rest upon his shoulders.

“It doesn’t worry me very much,” he said.

I looked about at the hundreds of bookkeepers and stenographers and checking clerks that filled room after room in every direction, and asked how this could be.

“I leave the worry to the system,” he answered. “Our system is so constructed that it bears the burden of all the detail of the business.”

“What is your general definition of system?” I asked.

“System,” he said, “is like a machine. It can do things no mortal can. A man by himself can’t pull much of a load. But he can construct an engine that will pull a heavily loaded train across the continent at fifty miles an hour. The strength of even a giant is very small when compared with a locomotive. And the biggest business man in the world can’t do very much unless he has a system, but with it he can work wonders. As the engine needs coal and water, and a steady fire, and oiled bearings, so does a great system need some attention. But the system, not the engineer, bears the burden, and pulls the heavy load.”

RED TAPE, THE ROBBER

Too much "system" is like a trusted watchman who steals things in the night. A business expert, looking for ways to cut down expenses in a big manufacturing establishment, was being shown through it by the manager. They came to a large office where a score or more of men were at work making out a certain kind of single item bills. The manager said, "Come on, there's nothing here; they are just making out bills." But the expert said, "Wait a minute, let us see if these bills are really necessary."

It was found that the bills were merely memoranda of purchases, and that the dealers were being furnished in another way with a complete record of the shipments. When the matter was looked squarely in the face it was seen that these bills were entirely unnecessary, and that the work of all those men really amounted to nothing. This work had been costing the company \$25,000 a year for clerk hire. The business was clearing about five per cent net profit, so that a half million dollars' worth of business had to be done to earn that amount — just to be wasted in useless red tape.

The same thing is going on hourly, in some degree, in nearly every business. There are dozens of reports, tables, records, totals, subdivisions of accounts, and the like, which are not worth what they cost. Perhaps red tape is robbing you. Look and see for yourself.

VARY THE WORK

SOME lines of work do not afford much room for growth. It is customary to group such work together and assign certain persons to do that exclusively. The work has to be done, the firms are willing to pay for it, and men are willing to do it, and so the work continues. But such work should not be assigned to ambitious boys — especially for any great length of time. Many boys come to work in the hope of gaining general experience, and should not be put into a blind rut when they are under the mistaken impression that they can grow out of it into something better. It would be a good plan, in many instances, to portion out such work so that no one has to become warped by doing it.

In a manufacturing establishment I saw a boy feeding cards into a machine. His work was nothing but a constant repetition of the same motion ten thousand times a day, a million times in four months. There was absolutely no variation in the work.

“What does that boy know to-day that he didn’t know a month ago?” I asked.

“Not very much,” said the man. “He may become expert in feeding that machine, but that is about all.”

“How long do you keep a boy at such work?” I asked.

“Oh, not very long. We let him work at it a while and then pass him along to something else and then put a new boy at the machine. It wouldn’t do to keep one boy at such work for a very long time. We need him higher up.”

INTERRUPTIONS WASTE TIME

If there were some way to estimate the exact percentage of time and working energy that is lost through interruptions, there would doubtless be many a change in the arrangement of offices.

"I've never done a full day's work since I have been in that office," a man said to me.

"Well, that's a confession," I said.

"No," he replied, "it's not a confession, it's a complaint. It isn't my fault. I'm willing to work, and I do put in full time. But the fact is our office is one continual interruption. If I was ever able to work steadily for fifteen minutes without having my attention distracted I can't remember it."

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Oh, there's so much confusion. There are eight of us in one room, and we interrupt each other every time we turn around. We are in such close quarters that every remark made in the room is heard by all, and has come to be understood as being intended for all. Persons from other departments come in to see us about the work and there is general conversation all around. What we need is to be scattered about a little more, and be where there is more individual seclusion. I have asked the manager to arrange the office differently, but it is hard to make him appreciate the need of it."

THE MOTE AND THE BEAM

THE faults we see in others are often to be found in some degree in ourselves. A merchant who took great pride in the appearance of his store, which was recognized as a model of its class, had occasion to visit a store in a neighboring city where no such pretensions were made. He was struck by the contrast. The windows were crudely trimmed, the salespeople were careless, the floors were not clean, the goods were not arranged in an orderly manner, large and unsightly sign cards were posted on every hand, and the atmosphere of the place was disagreeable. He congratulated himself that his store was not like that. But when he returned to his own store he noticed that his windows were not entirely free from the charge of crudeness. He noticed evidences of carelessness in his own salespeople. The floors, too, were not as clean as they might be. The manner of displaying goods also showed room for improvement. The sign cards might be neater. And many other points were found not so perfect as he had thought them.

In this experience he learned that it is possible to get so used to defects in things about us as not to notice them, and that we may have in ourselves the first elements of the very evils that shock us when we see them in others.

FIXED SALARIES

THE policy of fixed salaries for certain work, which some corporations adhere to, is open to question on purely economic grounds. It often causes a waste of energy far greater than a variation of the policy might cause.

A department manager in a large concern was allowed \$15 a week for a stenographer. He secured the services of a young woman at that figure, patiently taught her all the intricacies of his work, and was able to shift upon her much of the detail which had been requiring his personal attention. He had just begun to use this freedom to work out some new plans for the development of his department, when the stenographer asked for more money — a good position being open to her elsewhere, and she having made a good year's progress in her work. The manager was obliged to inform her that he was helpless in the matter, as the firm had fixed the salary of a stenographer for him at \$15, had declined to increase it before and would do so again. Accordingly she left — and the manager was obliged to give up his freedom and his new plans, and begin all over again to break in a new helper to carry on the burden of detail which otherwise would hold him at his desk. All his former effort at organizing his work had been lost — just as it would be again with the next helper.

What a colossal waste of energy must be caused by that one theory of fixed salaries — for the same thing must happen thousands of times.

UNCONSCIOUS DISORDER

THE disregard which some men have for the appearances of their offices is often hard to explain.

"Isn't it strange," I said to a furniture salesman, "that some men who have well furnished homes are content to spend the best part of their lives in offices that are crude and ill kept?"

"Yes, it is," he replied. "I have never been able to see how they can stand it. But I suppose it is just a matter of habit. They get so used to it that they can't realize how it looks to other people. I had an interesting experience about a month ago. A new man connected with the management of a large manufacturing concern came and bought a ninety-dollar mahogany desk. I went out to his office to see what else I might sell. You should have seen that office! The president of the concern, although he had a prosperous business and is said to be worth nearly a million, sat at an old battered-up desk that wouldn't have brought three dollars at a second-hand store. Another officer of the company actually had for a desk a kitchen table covered with wrapping paper. Everything they had was on that scale. But when the new desk was put in it opened their eyes — it caused a perfect revolution. They had all their rubbish cleaned out, built partitions, had new floors put in, and bought a number of mahogany desks and other pieces to match. They are proud of their offices now, and wonder how they ever stood it before."

TOO MUCH NOISE

ONE of the great problems the future will have to solve is how to lessen the noise. Silence is one of the rarest things in the world. It is a sublime thing, but we are so blunted by harsh noises that a moment of real silence would be hard to endure. But noise is discord, and should not seem necessary to us. It must, by its very nature, cause the loss of some of the essence of life; and it must be considered as something which progress will destroy.

I once visited an establishment where iron-wheeled trucks and typewriters, and shouts of men mingled with other noises to form a general clatter and confusion.

“How can you stand this noise?” I asked a man.

“Oh, we get used to it,” he said. “I don’t notice it very much. When I came back from my vacation it annoyed me a great deal, but I got used to it again. But a good deal of this noise is unnecessary. They could put rubber tires on those trucks, and put a partition around those type-writers, and stop this loud calling across the building, and it wouldn’t be so bad. But the men in authority aren’t around here much, and don’t seem to care. Perhaps they think our feelings are cheaper than partitions and rubber tires.”

Why not take a few reasonable measures to lessen unnecessary noise, instead of blunting the sensibilities and getting used to it? It would add much to the efficiency of the workers.

MIND THE LITTLE THINGS

THE sum of little things often exceeds a few great ones. It is often the little things that count in the long run.

A country merchant was once talking with a traveling man in regard to small wares. "I can't see," he said, "how it pays to bother with so many of those little things. Now if I sell an item for ten dollars I can see where my profit comes in. But ten cents, fifteen cents, twenty-five cents — where's the profit?"

"I know something that is better than an argument," said the traveling man. "You just take a quantity of your old sales-checks, and have them sorted according to amounts. Put everything that is less than a dollar in one pile, and everything over ten dollars in another pile, and so on. I don't know just what you will find, but you will learn something."

Some years later the merchant came into a wholesale house, and by chance met the traveling man. "You don't remember me, do you?" he said.

"Not your name, nor your town," said the other, "but you are the man that was going to sort his sales-checks."

"That's right," said the merchant. "And I want to tell you I am a thousand times obliged to you for the suggestion. I now own ten stores, and we go in strong for goods under a dollar."

HOW TIME IS WASTED

MANY a man who is at the head of a business or a department loses much valuable time because other people bring to him matters that might readily be cared for by his assistants. A factory superintendent was leaving his office when he was informed that a man was waiting to see him. He looked at the man and then walked off.

"I know that man," he said, "and I know what he wants. He is from one of the other departments. He always asks for me every time he brings a matter that belongs to the stock-clerk or the bookkeeper. If I am not there they will attend to it just as well as I can. But when I am there they wait for me to take the initiative. I am trying to teach them to take some responsibility about their work, and keeping out of the office is one way to put them on their own resources."

While this is a rule that should be applied only in dealing with certain types of assistants, it contains a wholesome measure of general common sense. Many department managers allow their time to be taken up with unnecessary interviews on matters that they might teach their assistants to attend to at first hand. And many persons in every large business take to the heads of the departments matters that are too commonplace to need their personal attention. This lessens the producing time of the most highly paid workers in the business — a significant loss.

A TALLOW CANDLE STANDARD

A MAN who had never heard of gas or electric lights might be content with tallow candles. Some business men, because they are not well informed on lines tributary to their business, and are not especially open to conviction, are still content to order candles. And the dealers are obliged to keep a few boxes on the top shelf waiting for the men who insist on having them.

A conspicuous instance of this policy is in the matter of printing. The average business man knows too little about it. Perhaps not one man in ten knows the "point system" — the universal standard of type measurement. Not knowing the first elements of printing, how can he know very much about the latest improvements in color work? How can business men buy printing intelligently when they do not know what the market affords? How can they dictate the characteristics of the printing that is to represent their business? How can they order what is best for their business if they don't even know the best exists?

It is the same in many other lines. The architect must know the latest improvements in bricks; the dry goods man must know the most recent effects in weaving, and so on. Unless this is done there is no telling how far from the mark he may hit. In an electric light age it will never do to stick to the tallow candle standard.

THEORIES AND FACTS

WE hear it said that one man proceeds from theory and another from facts. This difference is usually pointed out by the man who prides himself on being "practical." It is well to be practical, but there is such a thing as being "too practical," as the term goes. A man is "too practical" when he measures the value of every action by immediate results, and does not allow time for natural development, does not take into consideration the results which, though vital, cannot be measured in dollars and cents — such as prestige, good will, and established use.

On the other hand, a man is too theoretical when he disregards fundamental facts, and either ignorantly or carelessly goes ahead contrary to what sound experience has proved to be true.

Have theories, for they are the life of your plans and actions; and don't forsake your theory just because you meet with a few minor facts that are unfavorable — these are but obstacles. But be sure you have a place in your theory for all facts that are fundamental.

PLAY FAIR

LITTLE differences of opinion should not be allowed to shut off profitable business relations. A manufacturer changed printers merely to satisfy his dignity in a little dispute over a dollar's worth of paper. The new printer was not equipped to do the work as well as the old one, who had done it for years. After much loss of time and money and the loss of many customers because of a belated catalogue, the manufacturer found it to his advantage to smother his pride and return meekly to his first printer.

It is foolish to divert business from long established and otherwise satisfactory channels just to satisfy a whim. It reminds one of the little girl who refused to play with the others because they wouldn't let her win every game.

Business is a game. Play the game fairly according to rules. Don't pout if your playmate scores one over you occasionally — that's part of the pleasure of the game.

WAITING IN THE ANTE-ROOM

MUCH valuable time is wasted waiting to see the men who sit in private offices. While a great deal of this waiting is inevitable, a little more system on the part of the men who conduct the offices would prove a boon to callers.

Not long ago I waited half an hour to see a man, and when I made inquiry I found that my card had not been sent in. The boy was so afraid of the manager that he wouldn't go in until the other caller came out. The manager, not knowing that I was waiting, was having a sort of social visit with his caller. My business could have been transacted in one minute, but it took thirty — thirty times as long as it might have taken.

Managers ought not to have office boys that are afraid of them. They should have the cards come right in so they can see that others are waiting. If they are going to be busy a long time they should send out word to that effect, or better, step out a minute and say so. They should provide something to read — a few good papers and magazines — for those who have to wait.

PROVIDE AGAINST DISPUTE

A DEFINITE understanding in the beginning often saves a great deal of trouble later on. A salesman began work for a typewriter concern on commission. He was assigned to a certain territory, and told in a general way that he was to have all that the territory yielded. Both the salesman and the manager seemed to understand the agreement — but each understood it in his own way.

After a while trouble began. One customer who had been rounded up by the salesman came to the office and completed his purchase. Some customers had already been interested and reported by a previous salesman. Some prospective customers reported by the salesman were handled at a different office by salaried employes of the company. The salesman claimed his commissions, and the house disputed his right to them. The salesman had but three courses open—to sue, to quit, or to give in. He chose to quit—losing, however, a number of good prospects.

Later on the manager was heard to remark, "We lose business for lack of men. Good men are very scarce." Did he dream that nearly every good man in the business had heard the story of the ex-salesman? Such stories certainly tend to make good men scarce.

Both employer and employe in this case lost by not having a definite understanding. If the employer was acting in good faith he should have provided for such contingencies when he employed the man, leaving no room for dispute even with an agent who did not know enough to bring up the points in advance.

THE NEW MAN IN POWER

FULL authority should seldom be given suddenly to an untried man. Like the novice trying to run an automobile, he is apt to cause damage. His intentions may be of the best, but a wrong touch at the lever in a moment of doubt or excitement may prove disastrous. He has everything to gain and nothing to lose by making his trial efforts under the supervision of a more experienced man. The theory of teaching a boy to swim by pushing him off the bridge may work in some instances, but that is not always a safe method to follow. It should not be considered uncomplimentary to a new man to let him begin his administration in a mild way, and take on more authority as he demonstrates his ability to use it wisely.

Nearly every new man in authority passes through an experimental stage — especially if he has not had some definite experience along similar lines. Due allowance should be made for the difficulty which any man may encounter while he is learning to get just the right grip on his sceptre. Instead of severely criticising a new manager because of lapses from an ideal standard, it would be better to regard his extreme rulings as temporary experiments rather than matured specimens of his administrative methods.

SUSPENSE

SUSPENSE is one of the greatest dead weights progress has ever had to carry — unnecessary suspense, the suspense of neglect, procrastination, and thoughtlessness. In the cities we often see the familiar sight of a street blockade. Street cars, trucks, wagons, carriages, automobiles, all entangled in a mass where none can move forward or backward. I have often looked at such blockades and thought of the other delays that might also be caused by the non-coming of those entangled there — the merchant and his customers waiting for goods to be delivered, the workman waiting for materials, the people waiting for friends, and a thousand contingent purposes that no one might think of — all waiting for the front car to move out of the narrow passage, and it waiting for the wagon broken down on the track ahead of it. In one instance I remember the men were making all possible haste to clear away the obstruction so the great procession might move on. But I often think of the blockade in business affairs — not wagons and automobiles, but orders and advices and invoices and proofs and errands — where no one is clearing away the obstruction, but all are waiting patiently or impatiently, but without turning a hand to break the blockade. Perhaps on your desk or in your pigeon-hole is the piece of paper they are all waiting for.



DEVELOPING THE WORKERS

MULTIPLY YOUR ASSETS

ONE of the greatest opportunities before any business is that of developing the capacity of its employes by systematic instruction.

A certain manufacturer who prints magazines, booklets, and bulletins for his salesmen, once explained his theory. It is something like this:

Two men know more than one; two hundred men know more than two. Two hundred salesmen have two hundred different ways of handling a given point — and all of them cannot be the best. Perhaps six are better than the others. Those six best ways are an asset of the company. By giving those ideas to all the other salesmen, that asset is multiplied by two hundred. If one idea helps one salesman to sell ten cents more a week, that is \$5.00 a year for one, or \$1,000 a year for all. If it sells a dollar or more a week, that is \$10,000 a year. If there are fifty such ideas in a year they increase the business \$250,000. And the year's sales prove it.

This is no mere business suggestion. It is a great idea of tremendous power and scope — like the discovery of steam and electricity, and the invention of printing. Are you modern enough to grasp it?

TEACHING EMPLOYEES

INSTRUCTIONS to employes may with profit be occasionally repeated. Even those who thoroughly understand them are helped by having their minds refreshed on some of the points, while to the majority the repetition will come with all the force of a new idea. A teacher, referring to a recent experience with her class, remarked, "Education is largely a process of pouring water through a sieve in the hope that some will cling to the meshes."

Sometimes it is found that the second explanation of a process, method, or attitude accomplishes more vital work in the development of the employe than does the first. The reason for this is that the first explanation has prepared the mind for it, so that when it is explained a second time there is enough of the first thought left to answer to the second — to appreciate it and make it welcome.

The average employe likes to learn more and more about his business; and if instruction be given in the right way it becomes an effective quickener of every phase of purpose and energy.

Many employers and managers need to be often reminded of the undeveloped resources of their men and women. It is just as much a part of good business judgment to work the field of individual capacity as it is to work more and more thoroughly the fields of trade.

WHAT EMPLOYEES NEED

THE importance of coaching employes in the right attitude towards their work is obvious when we stop to consider that most of the needs of the average worker are mental needs. Ask any employer or manager what his men need in order to be better workmen and he will invariably answer by naming some mental quality. One says, "They need more earnestness in their work." Another says, "They need more comprehensiveness, a better grasp of the purpose of the work." Another says, "They need more thoroughness." Others point out the need of initiative, judgment, enthusiasm, common sense, and so on. In every case the need is mental.

These mental needs are usually supplied in three ways — all of them consciously communicative. One way is to distribute printed matter among the workers, containing discussions of the points that need to be expressed in their work. Another way is to get the employes together in a body and have them addressed by some member of the firm, or by a specialist from the outside. The other way is in systematic talks either singly or in groups by the heads of departments to the men and women under their charge.

Most of the firms that have made adequate trial of such methods speak confidently of the good accomplished. This may be taken as trustworthy evidence of the general utility of the methods suggested.

STOOPING TO CONQUER

ONE of the greatest problems confronting the average mercantile employer to-day is how to get young men and young women to do their best. I heard a theory on this subject that seems to have a measure of truth in it — at least it works, and that is a good test.

It was the idea of getting the employe's interest before you try to educate him. A manager was showing me some copies of a little monthly magazine issued in the interests of the employes of the establishment. It seemed to me to be filled up with trivial personalities, pictures of groups of employes, home-made cartoons, jokes and various grades of nonsense. I mentioned this fact to the manager and he said:

“Yes, I know it looks frivolous to you, but it is very interesting to our employes. If we printed nothing but learned essays on business principles, or formal bulletins of instructions, they would not be widely read. But if you fill up the magazine with such things as the employes are already interested in, they will read it — and that is half of the battle. Then you can throw in a few simple words of advice here and there and some of it is read and accepted. And even that little is worth the effort and the cost. If you want to reach employes you must first get their interest, and then talk in language that they can understand.”

THE UNWISE REPRIMAND

It is seldom desirable to reprimand an employe before others. It injures his self-respect, causes him to resent the criticism, and closes his mind against any good it might do him. To call him aside privately and administer the rebuke is the more effectual way, and the more gentlemanly way. Business authority should not assume the privilege of ruthlessly transgressing the laws of common courtesy of man to man.

A reprimand in the presence of others may be the desirable procedure in cases where the guilty one has done something which intimately concerns all present — as in the case of an underhand misrepresentation. But the need of such action is rare. The usual incident of an open reprimand is not so carefully planned. It is merely the thoughtless outburst in a moment of displeasure, regardless of those who may happen to be present. The humiliation resulting from such an incident has no wholesome effect upon the individual, and cannot but serve to lessen his legitimate pride in his work. He goes among his fellow workers with the knowledge that each one knows of the incident, and this causes him to feel disgraced and lose a measure of his self-respect. The public word of disfavor is apt to find an echo in other minds and so turn upon the individual unnecessary and undeserved criticism.

A TASK FOR REFORMERS

THE effort to reform humanity should not always begin at the bottom. Sometimes it is wise to begin at the top, and sometimes in the middle — and always where the soil is worth the seed.

In speaking of this matter a man of wide business experience said:

“There is a big field waiting for reformers. It is not among the so-called lower classes, where so much reform effort is spent, and where a good deal of it is no doubt wasted. It is among the people who are represented by the ‘average employe’ in our great mercantile and industrial institutions. It is a sad fact that only a very small percentage of these people are really in earnest — that is, are really trying to do their best.”

“What per cent would you say?” I asked.

“Not over five per cent,” he replied. “I really think that would be a high estimate.”

“Oh, you can’t mean that!” I exclaimed.

“Yes, I do,” he asserted. “It may vary a little in different establishments, and in different kinds of work, but in general that is just about where the matter stands. My observations are wide, and cover a period of twenty years. Something should be done to turn back the tide of indifference and shiftlessness which spreads through this class of employes in nearly every business establishment.”

HELPING THE UNAMBITIOUS

THE question is sometimes asked: "What can be done to arouse the large class of employes, especially boys and young men, who seem to have no aim in life beyond pay-day and quitting time?"

This is an ever recurring question to the managers of most business establishments. For sheer lack of better material millions of this class of employes are reluctantly admitted to the industrial pay rolls of the country, and so come to form a part of the working forces of nearly every business. The question is therefore a serious one to most persons in authority in business.

In talking with a prominent business man along this line, he said:

"Education of some sort, moral or industrial, is the only hope for such people. Business is about the only point of contact they have with anything higher than their own plane, so it must be largely through business that they will receive any awakening that may come to them. It is a kind of missionary work that seems thrust upon the business man, a part of the moral responsibility of the employer, and must often be patiently carried on whether it fully pays for itself in each case or not."

THE MASTER'S EYE

THERE is an ancient proverb that "the master's eye does more work than both his hands." The modern version of the master's eye is a card catalogue system that keeps a record of the work of thousands of employes of a great industrial institution. In passing such a card file I made inquiry about it, and the manager said:

"This is our system for keeping track of the mistakes made by employes. Nearly every mistake we discover in any part of the work is traced back to the employe who made it, and it is recorded here against his name."

"Do you point out each person's mistakes to him at the time?"

"Yes, when they amount to much. But we don't speak about every mistake. That would only confuse the employes and make them fearful and probably lead to making more errors."

"What do you find is the cause for most mistakes?"

"Carelessness — almost every time."

"How does your system reach that?"

"Well," he said, "the mere fact that we keep such a record is a stimulus to employes to be careful. Even if we never looked up a card it would be worth while keeping up the system just for the general influence it has. But we refer to it often. And we know it works because the percentage of mistakes is lowered from year to year."

IN THE PAY ENVELOPE

THERE is a constantly recurring opportunity to do something for the education of employes in using the pay envelope to carry some message of business policy.

"I never let a pay-day pass," said a manager to me, "without putting a little printed slip of some kind in the envelopes for the employes. Many good working ideas can be conveyed to them in that way."

"What sort of stuff do you give them?" I asked.

"Things like this," he said, reaching in a drawer and pulling out a handful of little cards. One had a paragraph about "Courtesy," another about "Punctuality," and others about "Enthusiasm," "Cheerfulness," "Errors," and the like.

"You can say a lot of things in this way that you can't in any other," he continued "Now take that card on 'Punctuality.' We have a number of men here that I don't especially care to reprimand — they are a little too far along for that. But they waste a lot of time around the edges of the day. I couldn't very well speak to them about it. But when that card came out those very men took it to themselves and have been keeping better time every since. In many ways I can see the effect of these little cards on our people, and I think it is well worth the trouble and cost."

GOOD READING FOR EMPLOYEES

A GOOD way to stimulate the energies of employes is to furnish them with good books, which awaken them to see their opportunities in life and give them a purpose to work for.

In an industrial establishment recently I saw a bulletin to employes which read:

“At the office will be found a number of helpful books which, we believe, will be of great value to those of our employes who will read them. To bring these books within the reach of all, we have purchased a quantity of them at a low price and offer them to employes at 25 cents each. The regular selling price of these books is one dollar.”

When I spoke to the manager about the plan he said, “Yes, we not only sell them the books for 25 cents, but we give them all the time they want to pay it in — several months if they want to.”

“And do you dispose of many books?” I asked.

“Not so many as I would like,” he replied. “I think we have sold three or four hundred of this last lot. But when you stop to think that we have several thousand employes it doesn’t seem a large percentage. But it reaches those that are in earnest, and those are the very ones we hoped to reach when we began this plan. The right kind of a book will do wonders for an employe.”

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENTHUSIASM

EVERY manager admits the value of enthusiasm in business but many who admire it do not know how to stir it up among their men.

If we analyze enthusiasm we find it is made up of certain thoughts and feelings. These are some of them: The feeling that you have an opportunity to show what is in you — an opportunity that every man loves; a certain measure of responsibility that quickens self-reliance and pride in one's work; a wholesome measure of freedom; a goal to work for; the spirit of a game, the inherent desire to win; the assurance that those above you are interested in your work; the feeling that you are doing something worth while, something that will be successful, something that is, in a sense, new; the thought that others are watching the outcome of what you are doing; a clear view of the plans ahead; the spirit of an occasion; the feeling that time is short and precious; a cordial relation between those working together; and the enthusiasm of others.

If the manager will do his part to foster these various elements the total effect will be enthusiasm — a spontaneous, energetic, wholesome, conquering enthusiasm.

A PROMOTION SYSTEM

THE cry is often heard that many large business houses have little in the way of a promotion system, and that employes may work away in some department for years without official notice being taken of them as individuals. It is good to know that this is not true in all business houses, some of which have methods that bring the individual to the attention not merely of the department manager but of those in highest authority.

In a large mercantile institution I was shown a system which is perhaps typical of the best method in general use. The man who explained it to me said:

“We have a complete information card for every employe. The cards are arranged according to the time of promotion or consideration. We go over a certain number of these cards each day or each week, look up the individual, make inquiries about him, consider his fitness for promotion or advancement in salary, and take such action as the conditions warrant. In the course of six months we get around to the same person again. If an increase was promised we have a note of it. If it is desired to consider a person one month or three months from the time the matter comes up, his card is put in the proper box to be considered at that time. The result is that no one is ever lost sight of, and many satisfactory promotions are made possible.”

THE OTHER SIDE

A CORRESPONDENT, referring to the point quoted from a prominent employer, to the effect that "not over five per cent of the employes of the average mercantile concern are in earnest, that is, are really trying to do their best," writes:

"We must consider both sides of the question. If it is true that only five per cent are in earnest it seems to my mind a severe arraignment of employers themselves. Interest cannot be one-sided. It must be mutual. Employers can develop more interest among employes by the simple process of manifesting more interest on their own part. Many employers do not know their employes at all and do not make much effort to know them. They know the heads of departments, and sometimes the assistants, but the rest of the force they don't know even by sight. Furthermore, there is seldom anything like a promotion system whereby honest attention to business gets proper recognition and reward. Vacancies are frequently filled with new employes when the older ones are well able to do the work. Let employers show some definite interest in employes, and you will see the employes' interest in the business increasing."

ENLIGHTENED SELFISHNESS

THERE seems to be a growing recognition of the practical wisdom of what is sometimes known as "enlightened selfishness." This idea is, to a certain extent, merely an elaboration of the old adage that "Sugar draws more flies than vinegar." The modern way of putting it is that if you want to do a big business you have to give people their money's worth; if you want to make people feel at home in your place of business you have to give them a homelike welcome; if you want to get the most out of your employes you have to do all you can to make them take an interest in your work, by making their work pleasant and profitable to them; if you want your horse to do a good day's work you must give him plenty of corn.

Like other great ideas this one is making its way in the world gradually. People are not willing to make room for it all at once. They are accustomed to reason that the horse would probably not miss one ear of corn. But they are trying the new idea cautiously — with something of the timidity of the man who ate the first oyster. They find that it is wholesome, and then give it a more extended trial. And so it happens that the relations of employer and employe, buyer and seller, producer and consumer, are becoming more generous, more frank, more liberal. A better business spirit is springing up wherever this idea is received and tried.

A THOUGHTLESS WASTE

MUCH of the working capacity of men is wasted because their superiors keep them doing little things that are far below their ability. One often sees grown young men working at the elbow of a manager and being employed on errands and details that a boy might do. The manager is sometimes merely thoughtless in the matter. He wants his office-boy work well done, and gives it to a man to do. A manager in turn often receives a lot of little nothings from the man above him, which he must attend to himself because he was asked to, when a young man might do them just as well. An expert is often asked to take on routine that is far below his normal plane of work — even while others are being deprived of growth for want of that very work.

It is true that details are often very important, but that is no reason for giving a man a boy's work. This spirit in an organization causes a great waste of energy. It is one of those expenses that do not show on the ledger. There is no account entitled, "Ability paid for but not used," but there are hundreds of items that might properly be entered under that head. Employers and managers may well bear in mind that keeping a man busy all the time does not necessarily mean getting the most out of him. Let them rather consider the more valuable things he might be doing.

PREVENTING TEMPTATION

EVERY business house ought to make ample provision to protect its employes from temptation. A merchant was showing me his system for checking out goods. Every piece of merchandise and every transaction had to pass through several hands. It would have been most difficult to take anything without detection.

"How do your employes regard the system?" I asked.

"Those that really think about it at all seem to appreciate that it is a protection and not a reflection on their honesty. They know that if anything should be taken, the blame would be fixed on the right person, and no breath of suspicion would attach to the innocent."

"Do you have much trouble?" I asked.

"Very little. The system discourages any thought of taking anything. Occasionally there is a man who might be tempted if he thought he would escape detection, but this system helps to support his moral sense. We had trouble before we put in this system. Then everything went at loose ends, and although we missed things we were unable to fix the blame. We finally caught two men and they declared that they never would have started on the wrong way if we had not made it so easy for them. The constant suggestion caused by our laxity was too much for them. After that we felt it our plain duty to install a system that would protect any such men from temptation, as well as to exonerate the innocent in case of loss, and also to protect ourselves."

FOLLOW UP YOUR WORK

SUBMITTING a detail to a superior doesn't lessen your responsibility for carrying the work through on time — unless you are specifically told to let it wait. Many a time a piece of work is delayed by someone who does not realize that he is delaying it, and who would gladly do his part quickly and allow the work to proceed if the matter were only called to his attention. Because no one says anything to him he is apt to assume that there is no hurry, even while others are waiting and wondering why he holds it so long.

A manager called one of his assistants and asked him the cause of the delay in getting some carpenter repair work done. The assistant replied: "I've been waiting for you."

"How so?" asked the manager.

"You said to show you the letter I wrote about it, and I left it on your desk several days ago."

"Why didn't you ask for it? I didn't see it," said the manager.

When a search was made for it the letter was found covered up with other things on the desk.

"I supposed you were holding it for some reason," said the man.

"No," said the manager. "I wasn't. I didn't see it, and I don't hold myself responsible for the delay. It was your business to get it through — not mine."

WASTING TIME

THE employe who is inclined to waste time, whether by arriving late in the morning, by quitting actual work before closing time, or by unnecessary inactivity during the intermediate portions of the day, should look at the matter once in a while from the employer's standpoint. When this is done fairly and squarely there will be less murmuring because of any strict time regulations made by the employer. And, with employes who are conscientious, there will be less disposition to waste time by tardiness or loafing.

An employer recently explained to me just how the matter looked from his point of view.

"Suppose," he said, "an employe wastes ten minutes a day. That is an hour a week, or 52 hours a year. A week with us has fifty working hours in it. So, you see, the man who wastes ten minutes a day, wastes a week in a year. If I only had one employe I might not mind it, but as I have over 300 it means that I have to pay for 300 weeks' service that I don't get. And furthermore, ten minutes' waste of time is a very low estimate. Many a fellow punches his time on the clock all right, prides himself on his punctuality record, and then wastes perhaps an hour a day idling around. Loafing is more or less contagious, and so the idler not only wastes his own time but unconsciously influences others to do the same."

BLUE LAWS UNNECESSARY

IN a certain large and otherwise reputable business office there is a rule which reads, "Employees are forbidden to use the telephone for personal business."

It is not difficult to imagine the condition of affairs which one day culminated in this rule. It was no doubt framed to put a stop to an overworked habit of visiting by telephone. But the rule is too drastic. The manager who made it probably thought he would have to "treat them all alike." But in so doing he has made the many suffer for the faults of the few—and has thereby impaired the loyalty of every one of his employes.

An occasional use of a telephone for personal calls is often a matter of vital importance to the individual.

Men who make drastic rules should realize that people have their lives to live as well as their work to do.

It was a relief to find that another large firm had solved the same problem with this sensible rule:

"The use of the telephones for long and unnecessary personal conversation by employes is forbidden. We readily grant the privilege of using the telephone for personal matters when it seems necessary, but insist that the privilege be not abused."

CRITICISING SUPERIORS

A CORRESPONDENT writes: "Should an employer be criticised by his employes among themselves? Does not the habit of criticising superiors beget a spirit of disloyalty among employes, and so cause much of the friction they complain about? If employes would speak and think kindly of those above them in authority, and have some consideration for the trials and annoyances with which executives have to contend, wouldn't this tend to create an atmosphere of good feeling all around?"

My answer is, yes. Employes are too prone to get the notion that they are on one side and their superiors on another. It is possible to magnify the shortcomings of a superior until they seem very grievous. And when a number of employes get together and pool their ill feelings they often get worked up over some fancied wrong, and are disposed to distort every motive and misinterpret every act of the man above them. They come to see their manager through a mental fog not unlike that through which we are often obliged to view the opposing political candidate, be he saint or sinner.

An employe and his superior should be friends. Between friends there is a necessary disposition to "bear and forbear," to give each other the benefit of every doubt, to make liberal allowances, and to be friends in spite of differences of opinion. Unforgiving criticism is fatal to friendship.

WHAT THE EMPLOYER DOESN'T KNOW

THE abuse of delegated authority occasions much injustice which those higher in power do not always realize. Many things are done by subordinates that the manager would not sanction.

Near closing time in a large office one young woman was seen crying and another was trying to comfort her.

"What 's the matter, Grace?"

"Oh, Mr. Thomas said I had to work again to-night," she sobbed. "I am so tired I can hardly think. This makes four nights this week. Last night I was here till after ten o'clock, and then got scolded this morning because I was a few minutes late."

"Didn't he ask if you were willing to stay?"

"No, he didn't. He just came along and said, 'We want you to stay and help to-night.'"

"Why don't you speak to him about it?"

"I did that once and he made it so unpleasant for me I don't want to ask him again."

"Then why don't you go and tell Mr. Dodson about it?"

"That would be worse than ever, for he would make a fuss and Mr. Thomas would take his grudge out on me for the next two months. If Mr. Dodson would only look around once in a while and find out what is going on here, he could have something to say for himself without waiting for complaints."

WHY MISTAKES ARE MADE

MISTAKES do not “happen” — they are the results of causes. A vast measure of time, money, and opportunity is lost in making mistakes and trying to rectify them. To correct mistakes is a good work, but to prevent them is a far higher achievement. The “ounce of prevention” may be applied by carefully considering some of the chief causes of errors in business. They are:

- Carelessness, inattention, and superficial interest;
- Laziness—not being willing to take the trouble;
- Accepting appearances as facts without investigation;
- Proceeding without discussion or advice;
- Impulsive decisions not well thought out;
- Lack of foresight and preparation;
- Wrong theories and biased advice;
- False economy and desire for gain;
- Lack of tact and thoughtfulness;
- Forgetting and neglect of duty;
- Depending on those not properly instructed;
- Failure to take due precautions;
- Failure to safeguard weak points;
- Overconfidence and exaggerated hopes.

The remainder may be charitably classed as the result of human frailty — a last resort in explaining mistakes that cannot be rectified nor traced to their roots in undeveloped character.

SELECTING A MAN

PICKING out the right man for the place, often measures the difference between success and failure in a business. More often it measures the difference between a moderate success and a phenomenal one.

Twenty or more years ago a carriage factory was started with the idea of doing things in an original way, and a man was chosen to carry out the idea. He had had no previous experience in that line, but he had the right idea and grasped the plan enthusiastically. The work began on a simple scale so that the inexperienced man was able to feel his way. The business grew until it attained great proportions. The same man is still at the head of it, not as the owner, but as the manager. He proved to be the right man for the place. It would be difficult to imagine how he might have made the business more successful in that particular line.

In thinking of this the thought occurred to me, suppose some other man had been chosen in the beginning. Suppose he had had wide experience, but a different idea. He might have made more rapid progress at the start, or he might have turned the whole business into other channels and have given it a different character. He might not have been able to grow up with it, or might have left it after the first year's trial. The present greatness of the business might have been unknown to-day if it hadn't been that the right man was chosen when the business was small.

MISSIONARIES OF REFINEMENT

A MAN took charge of an office in which he had been working as an assistant. The force was composed of six or eight men. The first move of the new manager was to put a young woman in the office. In speaking of the matter he said:

“The presence of a woman in an office has a refining influence on the men. Our men have grown careless in their actions and conversation, and have given the office a spirit of coarseness that would not be shown if a woman were present. I want to purify the general atmosphere of the office, and I know no better way than to have a refined young woman there.”

The experiment was immediately successful. The character of the conversation of the office was greatly improved, a tendency to mild profanity was checked, and coarse jesting was felt to be out of place. The young woman sat quietly at her desk, entirely unconscious of the transformation her presence was causing. Her ladylike reserve commanded respect, and constantly reminded each man of the necessity of being a gentleman.

In thousands of offices the same refining influence is going on. More is due to the presence of a woman in the business world than is commonly realized. They are missionaries of refinement, and deserve credit in proportion as they perform that function well.

WITH THE MANAGER



THE MANAGER'S RESPONSIBILITY

A CORRESPONDENT once asked me:

“Why do you write so much about what the manager ought to do? Are there not faults among the employes that need correcting also?”

My reply was:

Yes, indeed, there are many faults that need correcting among the employes of every business. But the most important ones — the ones that need correcting first — are chiefly those for which the manager is responsible, either because of what he does or because of what he leaves undone. He may not always be to blame for isolated instances, but for wrong conditions he is usually responsible. If a boy is sent to deliver a package, and the cars are blocked so he cannot reach the place at the promised time, neither the boy nor the manager is especially to blame. But if a firm has the habit of being late in keeping its delivery promises, that is probably the manager's fault. It is his place to know the circumstances and see to it that the habit of delay is corrected. To undertake to correct such conditions by outside advice to the employes would be as useless as cutting off the tops of Canada thistles and leaving the roots in the ground.

The spirit of a business usually takes its character from the man at the head; and the same is true of the various departments and divisions of a business. Wrong conditions can usually be traced back to some one in authority. So it is at the top that reform should properly begin.

GOING TO HEADQUARTERS

THE question has been asked: "Is it right for an employe to carry a complaint over the head of one of his superiors to a higher officer of the company?"

Yes and no. What is right in a general way may not be expedient in certain cases, therefore not wise, hence not right. If the president or director of a company shows a disposition to get his information at first hand, and is tactful enough to protect his informant from the ill will of the officer against whose action the complaint is made, it may be the right thing to do. But if he is prone to handle the matter in an untactful manner the result is apt to be a greater discord than the one first complained of. Much tyranny is often exercised by under-officers when they feel secure that no information will be passed on to their superiors except through themselves, and this is largely obviated when any one may converse freely with the higher officers. It is plain, however, that too much freedom in this respect would greatly impair the discipline of an organization, and bring about a worse condition than might otherwise exist. The value of a rule along this line depends largely on the character of the individuals involved. In general it would seem well for the superior officer to be on easy speaking terms with any employe concerning things which affect that employe. If there is no injustice going on, the intermediate officers have nothing to fear, and should be willing to let everything be open and above board.

DON'T BE TOO NECESSARY

A MANAGER'S value to a business is not always in proportion to the influence of his personal presence. Sometimes the ability to leave a business for a time and have it go on as smoothly as ever is the best test of a man's control over it.

A factory manager was taking an extra hour away from his work one noon, and remarked to a friend, with apparent pride:

"I must be going back, or everything will be at a standstill. I can't leave the shop for two hours without it causing a difference in the work. It doesn't take long for things to be going at loose ends unless I am right there to watch them."

This man, trying indirectly to raise himself in his friend's estimation, was really confessing his own weakness and laying bare his secret misconception of the functions of a manager. The humor of the situation is apparent when we remember that many of the owners and managers of vast business establishments are able to be absent from their offices for weeks and even months at a time.

The good organizer, unless he is limited to very poor material, is usually the man who makes his own personal presence less and less of a necessity to the harmonious working of the system.

HANDLING MEN

How to get the best work out of the men is a many-sided problem for every manager, foreman, or employer. Like the farmer who gets thirty bushels of poor corn out of land that might produce eighty bushels of good corn, the employer needs to look well to the undeveloped possibilities of his organization. Whatever throws light on this great problem is always a matter of keen interest to the thorough business man.

In a conversation with the manager of a foundry — a man who had worked up from a mechanic—he said: “Some years ago I worked in a great manufacturing plant, and my work brought me in contact with all the foremen. I took advantage of the opportunity to study their methods of handling men, and often discussed the subject with them. One old and successful foreman with several hundred men in his department once told me his secret. He said, ‘Give a man a job, tell him what you want, and then go away from him. Don’t stand and watch him, but let him work it out. If you think it necessary to watch a job go to work with the men.’ I have since tried this and find it of value.”

Many of the most effective methods worked out by various managers are based on the clew here suggested—a recognition of the importance of considering the feelings of the men as a factor in their work.

TALK IT OVER

MUCH good may be done by a frank heart-to-heart talk between employer and employe. I knew a young man who was nearly everything a young man should not be—lazy, careless, indifferent, and insincere. The time came when he was to be discharged. But the manager did not discharge him. He gave him instead a plain heart-to-heart talk—not a mere scolding, but a friendly talk, full of kindness and solicitude for his welfare. The young man was deeply touched, and was aroused to see his folly and to appreciate his opportunities. He began all over again, with new motives, new energy, and new hope. And now he is one of the most valuable and progressive men in the employ of that concern.

This case is only one of a million. Nearly every successful man can look back and see where just such a talk came between him and failure. Many a career has been turned in the right direction by a talk of that kind.

Do you ever talk this way to the men working under your authority? You can help them very much if you will—and they will thank you for it.

THE FRIENDLY MANAGER

AN open friendship between employer and employe — the individual friendship between a manager and each of his men— is of great value to a business. It begets a loyalty that nothing else can. A man once said to me, "Whenever I feel a little blue I go and have a talk with Mr. Smith, and I come out feeling fine. We may not talk about what I had in mind, but I feel encouraged just the same."

I had often heard of Mr. Smith's success with his business and with his men, and this seemed a fair explanation of that success. Such an interchange of friendly confidence brings out the best there is in the men — or shows what they lack. It enables a manager to get in touch with the ruling motives of his men, and to learn how each individual should be treated in order to get the best results. In other words, it enables him to consider intelligently the personal equation.

Men are like the keys on a piano: you can get music or discord out of them according to the way you play upon them. It is refreshing to observe the growing recognition of this fact, and to see how oppression is decreasing in order that spontaneity may be utilized. It is good to know that it pays to be friendly, and that the business world is rapidly finding this out.

THE TOUCH OF POWER

IN handling men it is important to appreciate the degree to which they respond to a word or look. It is commonly admitted that the knowledge of how to handle men is a great business asset. And how else are they to be dealt with except by words, and thoughts, and attitudes, and hints, and all those little things by which men come to understand each other.

A word of appreciation for work well done, a word of caution for unseen danger, a word of helpful criticism for faulty work, a word of advice in time of uncertainty, a word of encouragement when the spirit is low—these are important things in dealing with men. The manager who neglects them or deems them unimportant is greatly mistaken as to the functions of a manager, no matter how great are his capacities in other lines.

Some managers are too prone to expect the very best results and yet not appreciate them when they get them. Even when these results have been worked out under extreme difficulties and inconveniences, there is often no word of recognition of the fact. The thoughtless omission of the right word at the right time, even if it be but a single word, may make a great difference in the subsequent spirit of the employe. Men feel the effects of the words and attitude of the men above them just as the big locomotive responds to the engineer's touch at the throttle lever. It is highly important that every touch be the right one at the time.

WEIGH YOUR WORDS

FEW men in authority really appreciate the effect of their casual words upon those working under their direction.

I recall an incident which is typical of the carelessness of some men who have a measure of authority over others. A young man had worked hard all forenoon arranging a stock of merchandise. Filled with enthusiasm, and craving a word of approval, he showed his work to his superior. "See, Mr. Smith, I've done all that since nine o'clock." And this was Smith's cruel and untactful reply: "Pshaw, boy! You ought to have done twice that much."

Think what a rare specimen of manhood it would have taken to withstand such a blow! Being merely human, the poor young man could only grit his teeth and mutter.

No sensible person would hit a delicately adjusted typewriter a blow with a hammer and expect it to go on performing its work correctly. The mental mechanism of men and women is even more delicate and requires more careful contact than most managers and co-workers realize.

SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION

MEN need a word of encouragement now and then just as much as they need food. For as food is to the body, so is encouragement to the mind and heart. A worker who is discouraged is not half a man. And even the most liberal compensation cannot take the place of a word of appreciation and encouragement given in the right spirit at the right time.

“That is a good job, Henry,” said a business man to his clerk, who had just finished ruling a book for him. And the young man threw himself into his work with renewed energy and interest. The man never knew how much that slight word of approval meant to the clerk, nor how much it added to his enthusiasm.

Men and women crave the assurance that their work is meeting with satisfaction. To withhold that assurance when it is due is not merely poor business policy—it is an injustice. Part of the compensation of every worker is the satisfaction of knowing that he is accomplishing something and to withhold that satisfaction is often more grievous than to hold back money duly earned.

More and more must those in authority in business recognize the human element in men and women—the part the heart plays in the work. It is possible, of course, to say too much to a man, giving him an over-elated sense of his value—but the tendency seems rather in the other direction; men do not get encouragement enough.

GIVE CREDIT FOR THE BEST

It usually pays to treat a man according to the best there is in him. A certain mechanic was regarded as quarrelsome and incompetent. The foreman and the other workmen treated him accordingly—and to them he always seemed to live and act the part of a most disagreeable man.

Finally he got a position in another shop where his old reputation was not allowed to follow him. The foreman treated him with courtesy and respect, calling him "Mr. Daniels" instead of "Bob," and gave him credit for being a first-class workman. Every latent power of his manhood expanded to meet this better estimate of himself, and he soon became, in fact as well as in theory, a competent workman with a normal disposition—one of the best in the shop.

The fact was, the foreman knew of the man's reputation, but refused to build on the old foundation. He established a better estimate of the man, and gave him an opportunity to live up to it.

Do you know the men about you by the best there is in them, or by the worst? Try giving them credit for all they might be, and see them respond to your estimate.

THE BANE OF FEAR

THOUSANDS of men and women are living in constant fear of losing their positions. It is good to know that in most instances this fear is groundless. But until this fact is known to the worker he is just as unhappy as if the danger were real — perhaps more so than if he actually had been dismissed.

This fear is so blighting in its effects, so detrimental to good work, that employers and managers and all with any degree of authority in business should take every reasonable precaution to remove it from the minds of employes. When necessary to quiet the thought of a fearful employe, it is sometimes well for the superior to come right out with the assurance and say, "Don't be afraid of losing your position with us. We need you and are depending on you to help us carry on this business." Such an assurance is of untold value to a worker, not only to his peace of mind but also to his work itself.

Some employers and managers try to rule their men by purposely keeping them in fear of losing their positions. Such a policy is nothing short of cruelty. A manager who knowingly does that has no moral right to hold authority at all. This policy should be utterly condemned wherever found. It may sometimes be done ignorantly, but the effect is the same as if done from cruel motives.

Let every sincere worker feel the satisfaction of knowing that his efforts are appreciated, and that he is not to be cast aside at the whim of any man.

GOLDEN EGGS

SPONTANEITY is the goose that lays the golden eggs. Many men managing a business or a part of a business — usually a part — think they can kill the goose and get all the eggs at once. But the results are in accordance with the ancient tradition.

Did you ever see a manager who drove his men so they muttered as they went about their work? Did you notice that their spontaneity was at a low ebb? Did you see them watch the clock, and count the minutes till closing time? Did you hear them talking behind his back? Did you see them hiding the facts from him? And did you see any golden eggs?

Again, did you ever see a manager who gave his men credit for being men — who expected much of them, left much to them, and let them feel his confidence in them — who governed by ideals instead of by fear? And did you see the enthusiasm with which his men worked? Did you see the intelligent interest they took in every detail? There 's where you saw the golden eggs.

Maybe you are some sort of a manager yourself. Which kind of a manager are you?

THE FROST THAT BLIGHTS

A MAN'S progressiveness is often measured by the way he receives a suggestion from an employe.

A salesman in a hardware store said to one of the managers, "Don't you think it would be a good idea to cut a door through that wall? We have the same kind of goods on both sides, and have to go all the way up to the other end every time we want to get through."

"Well," drawled the manager, "I guess if we can afford to pay you for your time, you can afford to take the trouble to walk around there. You sell the goods, young man, and I'll decide when to tear down the walls."

About three months later the young man had so far forgotten the sting of the former rebuff that he grew bold enough to make one more suggestion.

"If we had a medium size of this wrapping paper I think it would save a good many sheets of this large size in the course of a day."

"You think so? Well, you attend to your customers and we'll try to provide enough paper to wrap the goods up in."

What a wholesome atmosphere to work in! How it must unfold the buds of original thought — like the gentle spring rain falling on the grass and trees, or the warm sunshine that brings out the apple blossoms! Or — but may be it's only a cruel frost that kills the flowers.

FORSAKING THE POINT

FEAR of disfavor often holds back valuable information. A manager should let his employes feel free to stick to a point in opposition to himself when they know, or feel certain they know that they are serving his best interests in doing so.

A railroad clerk, handling the proofs of a new time-card came to a mark indicating a stop which he felt sure was not intended. When he took the matter to the manager he received scant attention, and was told the point was all right as it stood. The clerk returned to his work and let the matter go. A few days later, when the new time-card was in operation, the error was discovered, and the matter came again to the manager. He remembered, with chagrin, that his attention had been called to it before the card was printed. Wishing to justify himself, he sent for the young man, and said:

“Didn’t you call my attention to this point?”

“Yes, sir,” said the young man.

“What did you back down for?” asked the manager.

“You didn’t seemed inclined to pay any attention to it, and there was nothing else for me to do.”

“Well,” said the manager, “don’t ever do that again. If you find a point like that, make sure you are right, and then come to me and stick to it until I see it your way.”

MOVE ON AHEAD

THERE are two principal ways for a manager and his assistant to work together. One kind of a manager works very hard himself and does not leave much of importance for his assistant to do. The other kind lets his assistant do all he can while he reserves his own time and thought chiefly for things the assistant cannot do — at least, can not do so well. He puts responsibility on his assistant just as fast as the assistant shows his ability to take it.

The first manager retards his own growth and that of his assistant. He is always overworked and has little or no time to think of new things. He is often doing work that should have been done several days before. His assistant either chafes under the restraint, or concludes that he is incompetent, and settles into a dull mediocrity.

The second manager has time and opportunity to grow, and gives his assistant room to grow. The assistant feels his own strength, and loves his work. He shoulders the responsibility with eagerness, and the work goes merrily on.

Ask yourself, which is best.

SNAP JUDGMENT

OFFHAND decisions are sometimes productive of much mischief. Men who have the authority to say "Go ahead" do not always realize the importance of their decisions. In talking over the plans for a mercantile building the question of locating the central station for the pneumatic tube system came up. One man took a pencil and marked off a space on the plans for it. Nobody offered an objection and the point was considered as decided in about two minutes. In due time the plans were drawn, the tubes were laid, and the station installed. This took about two months, and cost thousands of dollars. Later when the system was in use, it was found that the noise of the central station was such a constant disturbance to the nearby offices that the station had to be removed to another part of the building.

Every business has such experiences. Questions of procedure come up and quick decisions are given on slight evidence. Sometimes the decision is understood to be undebatable — it is yes or no, and that settles it.

The wise manager, while appreciating quickness, never secures it at the expense of thoroughness when it involves a decision upon which a course of events depends. And usually his decisions are open to argument from his lieutenants to make sure that all sides of the question are carefully considered.

THE CAREER OF A MAN

AN employer once said to an employe who wanted to leave him and take a better position with a rival house:

“I cannot allow my biased business interests to counsel you at this time. It is too great a responsibility for me to influence the course of a man’s career. What you do at this point may affect your whole life. You are welcome to stay with us, and you are as welcome to go — I won’t urge or advise.”

Not every employer would take that stand. Many would think so much of their own interests that they would talk a man out of taking advantage of the opportunity of his life. But nothing is gained by such methods. When a bird is really hatched it does no good to try to keep the shell around it a while longer.

Another employer, under similar circumstances, said: “If it were merely a matter of money, I would pay you as much as the other concern will; but I think there is a good future for you in that place, and I advise you to take it.”

Another said: “I know of a good opening for a man like you. There isn’t much ahead of you here, and while I should hate to lose you I can’t refrain from telling you of such a good opportunity.”

Perhaps the future will bring more of such friendly relations between employe and employer — a keen interest in the welfare of the individual worker aside from immediate business advantage.

DISCHARGING A MAN

It is a serious thing to discharge a man — it may change his whole career. And it is often a positive injustice, as well as a business mistake, to discharge a man in a fit of temper.

A department head in a mercantile house came to the superintendent and said: "I want your permission to discharge that man right away — right on the spot." The superintendent, noticing that the man was angry, said: "You are mad now. Just cool off before you do anything. Come back tomorrow and see me and let me know if you still wish to discharge him. If you do you have my permission."

The next day the man came back to the superintendent and said: "You were right yesterday. I don't want to lose that man. He did all I said he did, but it was only a misunderstanding. We talked it out, and I see how it was. I might have made the same mistake myself. I believe that man is as earnest as any man in the department, and I want to keep him."

That is a good rule for every man in authority—wait until you cool off. Don't take a step when you are angry that may harm another man. In such a state of mind it is impossible to think correctly about a case, and any view you might take of it would perhaps be distorted. Nothing is lost by waiting a while and talking it over with another person.

THE DISTURBING ELEMENT

ALL unnecessary friction should be eliminated from a business for the sake of the business and the people connected with it. It is demoralizing to spend one's life in an atmosphere of continual discord, and it is also poor business. No worker can do his best under such conditions. If employers could estimate in money what portion of the pay roll is paid out in exchange for time and energy that are consumed by unnecessary friction it would place good nature at a high premium.

In speaking of this the proprietor of a large business remarked: "I have figured it out as a plain business principle that I can't afford to keep in my employ a man who proves to be a disturbing element. Years ago I saw that most friction in business can be traced down to a few individuals who are cross and ill-natured, and upset most of the people around them. I have seen more misery caused by a rude foreman or a sarcastic workman than by almost anything else. So we have a rule which gives the chronic scold an opportunity to reform or resign. We have had to lose some capable men, some of them high up in the organization, but I think we have gained by the loss. It may be hard on the individuals, but it is certainly a boon to those around them whose lives were made miserable by their ill nature. We have very little friction now."

“LET US”

SOMETIMES a man who occupies a position of authority devotes his energies not so much to building up the business as to intrenching himself in it. He tries to make himself indispensable, not by learning to do some things better than any one else, but by keeping others from learning the whole plan.

Such a man gathers information from all sources, but keeps it to himself. He undertakes, we will say, to build a wagon. He does not say to his lieutenants, “Let us build a wagon.” But he keeps the idea and the plan to himself, and says to one man, “Make me a wheel,” and to another, “Make me an axle,” and to another, “Make me a tongue,” and so on. He does not let his right hand man know what his left hand man is doing. He alone knows how to build the wagon, or that a wagon is being built.

Perhaps his employers will say: “Mr. Smith is a very smart man; he is the only man we have who knows how to build a wagon.” Some day they may learn that no one else knew how to build a wagon because Mr. Smith used his authority to keep others from knowing the whole plan of the work.

How much better to say to the men: “Let us build a wagon; let us make the wheels in this manner, and the axles in that.” Then the knowledge, skill and executive ability are spread out to develop the men and the business.

HOLD YOUR TEMPER

THE time must come when no man will be called great until he is a gentleman. I stood one day near the door of the private office of a "great" manufacturer. A boy who had been sent to the files returned and handed him a paper. It was the wrong date. The manufacturer had asked for "Thursday the 17th," and the boy had brought "Thursday the 16th" — the man was wrong. It was the "17th" that he really wanted. As soon as he had been given the wrong copy the "great man" flew into a rage and actually swore at the boy — a volley of epithets and ugly remarks. The boy, crushed and saddened, went and got the paper wanted.

I learned afterwards that this "great" man goes through a similar performance with any of his employes on the slightest provocation.

Such a man causes untold misery and is a blight on the lives of those around him. He should never have authority over others, no matter how "great" he may be in other ways. The time may come when such men will find it impossible to get others knowingly to work for them at any price. Something should be done to check the juggernaut of brutal temper that it may not be driven with the force of business authority over the lives and hearts of the world's patient workers.

THE MANLY APOLOGY

THERE is something noble about a manly apology. This is especially true when a business superior frankly admits to a man under him that he was mistaken in his criticism.

The manager of an office had taken occasion to reprove severely one of his clerks for what seemed to him a sufficient reason. He had accused the clerk of carelessly neglecting an important request he had made the day before. The clerk did not remember the request, and could not successfully deny that he had been told. The manager dwelt at length on the clerk's inefficiency and made an unpleasant experience for both.

On the following day the manager discovered among his papers his original memorandum, showing that he had not spoken to the clerk about the matter at all. He immediately called the clerk and made a manly acknowledgment of his own mistake and withdrew his criticism.

I wonder how many business men there are who would have done the same thing. Would not many of them have kept the facts to themselves and let the criticism stand? Such a man thinks the clerk would not remember — so why belittle himself? But the clerk does remember. He feels the injustice keenly, and marks down his respect for the manager, just as he surely marks it up when the wrong is righted by a manly apology. Self-respect demands that a man shall apologize for an unjust accusation.

IMPERSONAL CRITICISM

PERSONAL appearance is a subject upon which much might be said, but upon which little is said. Most men in authority in business hesitate to speak to employes about such things for fear of giving offense. A manager who feels free to criticise any detail of the work of his men seldom feels that he can bring himself to tell a man that his shoes, his nails, or his linen need attention. Much less does he feel free to criticise women employes on such matters. And so it happens that in almost every business house there are those who daily give offense to others by such neglect, and where these persons meet the public there is distinct harm to the business itself. There ought to be some way to cover this point effectively without giving undue offense.

One method is to post, where all employes may see it, a notice something like this:

“Employes must understand that a reasonable standard of personal appearance and personal cleanliness is required of all. Those who give offense to others through neglect of these matters will be subject to dismissal.”

Another method sometimes used is to put in the pay envelope of those needing such advice an impersonal letter or notice mentioning in a general way the necessity of recognizing proper standards.

THE SCRUTINY OF DETAIL

DETAILS are often of more importance than they seem to be — some of them are far-reaching. I once visited a large restaurant where everything was perfectly appointed, from the white linen to the appetizing food. But the knives and forks were ponderous — the largest I had ever seen — too large for convenient and graceful use.

In trying to figure out how such a mistake had been made — so out of keeping with the other features of the place — I could come to but one conclusion: The matter had not been given proper attention when the selection was made. The proprietor, being a man of large affairs and accustomed to passing details on to his lieutenants, probably considered the selection of knives a mere detail, and left it to others — and so the matter was superficially inquired into, or passed upon by some one who had very poor judgment.

It is well to be broad minded enough to leave details to assistants; but it is important to make sure that intelligent scrutiny is brought to bear upon all details that are to be multiplied. And it is well to classify as details only things that are so limited that they can't go very far wrong.

COMMON SENSE PERFECTION

THE right standard for work is perfection. We may not attain it, but we should come as near it as we can. And certainly we should not be satisfied to pass over obvious imperfections which may be readily corrected.

I have actually seen instances where a stenographer divided words in the middle of syllables at the end of a line, and was allowed to go on doing that sort of work for over a year. I pitied the girl for having such an employer, but I pitied more the man who had been signing her letters, and whose standard was so low that he was content to pass such work as satisfactory. A man who is careless in such things is sure to be careless in practically everything. And for such a spirit to permeate a business house through the example of those in authority, is an injustice to every employe, and to the public at large.

It is not necessary to split hairs — that 's the other extreme. But there is a wholesome standard, practical perfection, which should be the universal rule of every sincere worker.

PROFITABLE REFORMS

MANY worthy reforms are being made quietly through the rules of business houses. Men of purpose who are in authority in business houses should not overlook the opportunity thus afforded. As almost every wrong habit affects the tone of a business or the capacity of the individual, it is possible, without stepping beyond the simple bounds of business propriety, to curtail many evils and thus render a distinct service to society.

An instance worthy of note may be found in the rule of a certain large store which prohibits the use of chewing gum by employes while on duty. The good effect of this rule is not merely in breaking the repulsive habit among several hundred employes, but in the example it affords to other concerns, and in the stigma it places upon one of the most unrefined and inexcusable habits that ever gained ground with thoughtless persons. Further than this, it brings to the attention of many parents the idea of preventing the habit among children.

As a further evidence of the business value of such rules may be mentioned the fact — well known among successful salesmen — that the use of chewing gum and tobacco is so offensive to some customers that they hesitate to transact business with salesmen who use them in their presence.

LET THE BOY DO IT

Don't spend your valuable time doing work that you might teach the office boy to do. Once I saw a man sitting at a big mahogany desk ruling some sheets of paper. In the next room sat a restless boy with nothing to do. And nearby was a stenographer who appeared busy but who was really writing "Now is the time," etc. In the course of our conversation the man made the usual complaint of being "so busy he didn't have time to think."

"Why don't you give that boy some of your work?" I asked.

"Oh," said the man, "he couldn't do this the way I want it done."

"Then why don't you show him how?"

"Oh, I haven't time — that would take longer than to do it myself."

Too busy to think! Surely something was preventing him from thinking. I could see that the case was typical — he was that way about everything. And there are many like him.

You never know how great a help a bright boy can be until you take the trouble to teach him how to help you.

RUNNING DOWN AN ERROR

IN talking with a successful business manager the subject of correcting errors came up. I asked him: "How do you treat an employe when you find that he has made a mistake?"

"It depends on the employe," he said, "and on the nature of the mistake. I have a great deal more leniency for a mistake due to ignorance than for one due to carelessness. But I do not believe in abusing an employe for a mistake. I take the attitude that it is a serious thing, and that doubtless he regrets it very much. I don't try to smooth it over, but let his own self-conviction be his punishment."

"And what about correcting it?"

"Usually I require him to look into the matter and report to me, and show me just exactly how the mistake happened. He usually knows that point better than anyone else can tell him. I question him quietly until he admits that it was just because he let it go, or because he assumed some point without investigation, or some such reason. Nearly every mistake can be traced back to some lapse in thinking. When the real reason is brought to light we talk it over as the occasion warrants, and I make sure that he corrects the underlying thought which gave occasion for the error. This gives fair assurance that a similar mistake will not occur again. That is better than mere scolding."

BREAKING THE NEW MAN IN

WHEN a new man begins work in an office or a department he is often left to shift for himself without an outline of his duties or an introduction to those around him. It is good to hear what a young man told me.

“When I began here,” he said, “the manager of this department talked things over with me for nearly an hour. He told me the names of all the officers of the firm, and what they did, the names of all the heads of the departments I would come in contact with, the names of the other people here in the office, the names of the leading houses we did business with, and gave me a good general idea of the work of the whole office and a special outline of my duties and possibilities here. Then he took me around and introduced me to many of these people. The result was that I quickly got my bearings and felt at home from the first, and soon settled down to hard work. In my previous position with another firm my experience was very different. There were no introductions, and no outline, and no general information. My first three months were practically spent learning what the manager could have told me in an hour if he had taken the trouble to do it. The work here is twice as complicated as it was there, but I got the general plan of it well in mind the first day.”

Every manager should, for the moment, put himself in the place of the new employe and realize what a confused sense he must have of a large and unfamiliar business, and how easily that confusion could be taken away by a good talk about the work in general.

ENJOYING LIFE AS YOU GO

ONCE in a while we find a business man who takes a decidedly refreshing view of business life. Such men give us an idea of what the general business life might be if we had better standards.

"You seem inclined to surround yourself with beautiful things," I remarked to a business man, as I stood in his charming office-studio and cast an appreciative glance at the exquisite pictures, odd pottery, oriental rugs, dull mahogany, and artistic lighting effects.

"Well, I try to," he said. "Years ago I came to the conclusion that I should probably have to spend the best part of my life sitting in an office, and I made up my mind that I would make my office a livable place. If I am ever going to get any enjoyment out of the beautiful things of life it will have to be when I am awake, and that usually means while I am working right here in this office."

"Do you get much time to enjoy these treasures?" I asked, as I examined in detail some rare bindings, Japanese prints and cabinet pieces.

"Not as much as I should like," he said, "but enough to make it worth while. And the mere fact of having them at hand gives me some pleasure, and helps to keep my working standards up, whether I have much time to look at them or not."

A NEW BROOM

WHEN a man takes charge of an office or a department he invariably cleans out an accumulation of things which are more or less worthless, and makes a number of changes which are obviously needed. It is the old story of the new broom that sweeps clean. Why should not the present incumbent assume for a time the role of a new manager and make such changes as his successor might make?

Think what a novel experience it would be to come down to the office some morning with all the fresh enthusiasm of a new manager. Put yourself squarely in his place. Regard yourself, up to yesterday, as your own predecessor. Criticise the laxity of that predecessor with all the sternness you might employ if he happened to have another name than your own. Make no excuses for him or for his methods and accumulations. Get an entirely new view of the situation, and outline the policy you mean to pursue. If you need a new desk, get one. If you need a new cabinet, get one. If you know a better way to organize the work, do it. If your attitude toward those about you has been too reserved or too familiar, change it. Do everything with the spirit in which you might take a new position,—with the added assurance and knowledge of conditions which experience has given you. Perhaps this is just the change you need.

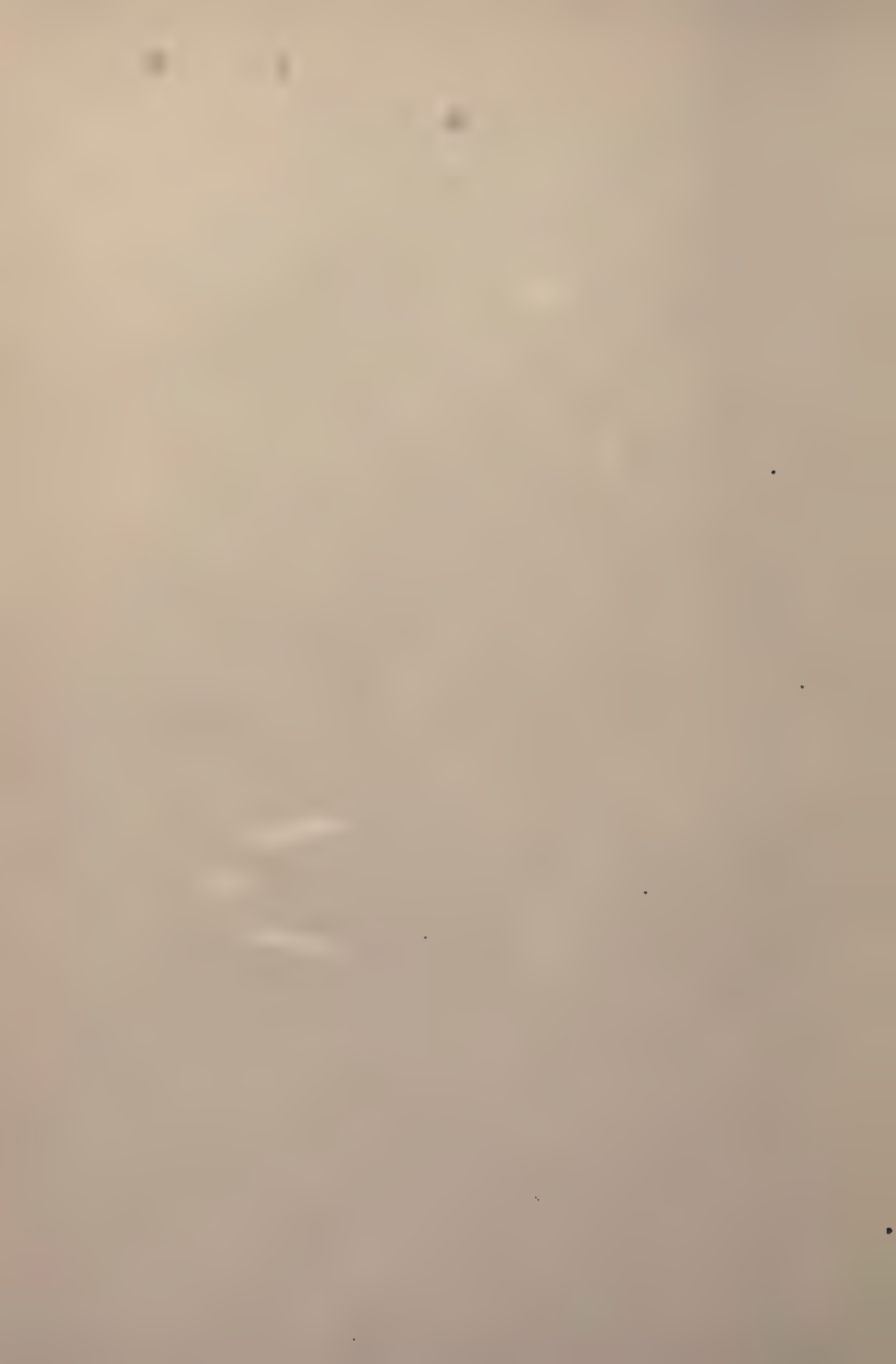
OPEN THE CHANNELS

A WIDE-AWAKE open-eyed force of employes is one of the greatest assets a business can have. Some business houses encourage employes to make suggestions in the interests of a business, both by making it known that such suggestions are always welcome, and by offering money rewards for such ideas as may be accepted.

This is an excellent spirit, and one which should, in some measure, permeate every business house. It allows the humblest worker to feel that he can have a voice in the conduct of the business if he can furnish an idea that is worth acting upon. If he thinks he would do such and such things if he were in authority, he has the privilege of having it done — if his idea is considered a good one. After all, it is the idea that really rules, and whoever furnishes an idea upon which any phase of a business is conducted may have the satisfaction of feeling that, in that degree, he has a part in the management of the business.

In those establishments where this rule is in force, where all employes are encouraged to express their thoughts to the management in regard to any part of the business, it has been found that even the least of the employes may make valuable suggestions which the managers had not thought of.

BUYING AND SELLING



CIVILIZATION ADVANCED BY THE SELLER

AN English merchant was visiting the United States for the purpose of gathering American ideas to infuse into his business. When he showed an interest in the adding machine in use in my office I asked him if he had them in his establishment. No, he had none. "This machine," I said, examining the metal plate, "was invented twenty years ago. How do you account for the fact that you never bought one?" He replied, "I suppose it is because the manufacturer never tried to sell us one."

I thought of the improvements which had been introduced into every line of business within the last twenty years — improvements in machinery, enough to stir the dullest imagination — improvements in system, method, manufacture, merchandise, custom, organization, and everything — because somebody had something to sell, and had argued down every outgrown tradition and prejudice that stood in his way, and had made a place for his product among the equipment of the world. I saw the inventor, the maker, the seller, the advertiser, in their true light as substantial benefactors of the human race. Civilization owes much to the man who has something to sell.

THE SALESMAN'S WORK

THE salesman who comes to your office to do business with you sometimes has far less courtesy accorded him than is due his attainments. There is a feeling among some men that all salesmen are more or less bothersome fellows who try to sell you something you don't want. And there is an element of snobbery in the attitude of some buyers—a feeling that the salesman belongs to a lower order because he solicits business. This attitude is unjust. There may be salesmen who do not merit the highest measure of respect, but that is the fault of the individual and not of the profession. But there are salesmen who are worthy of the fullest measure of courtesy and respect, first because they are gentlemen, and next because they are business men, and next because they are performing one of the most vital functions of society.

The most helpful invention ever made would hardly have its proper influence on civilization unless there were competent salesmen to champion its rights, expose the fallacies of older methods, and tear down the stone wall of prejudice with which the average buyer surrounds himself. Many of the most civilizing influences would fail to reach the people unless there were salesmen capable of clearing the way for them. The very channels of commercial progress are opened, not by inventors and not by manufacturers, but by salesmen. Give the salesman the honor due his place in the world's work.

THE GOODS BEHIND THE MAN

A MAN once made the remark to me that he could always tell a proposition by its salesman. In talking with an experienced buyer in a mercantile establishment I mentioned this point to him, and asked him if that had been his experience.

"No, indeed," he answered. "My observation has often been the reverse. I have seen a very poor salesman with a splendid proposition, and an exceptionally good salesman with a poor proposition."

"How do you account for it?" I asked.

"Well," he said, "in my business I am always on the lookout for new things. I find that a great many good things are first put on the market in a small way, and often necessarily in a most economical way. A small manufacturer can seldom afford an expert salesman—he must either go himself or send a man he can afford to employ. That frequently means a man who has never sold goods before. So if I should judge the proposition by the salesman I would often turn down a good thing. I'd rather examine thirty things I don't want than to miss one I do."

"Don't you think a good many buyers make a mistake there?" I asked.

"Yes, indeed," he said. "One of the best lines I control was turned down by a rival without proper investigation, obviously because the old man that invented it came in himself to sell it."

COURTESY DRAWS BUSINESS

THE effects of courtesy are often very great. A small merchant once entered a great wholesale house and asked to buy a certain kind of brush. It was not in stock. He said it was a special purchase for one of his customers, and asked if it could be procured. The salesman thought of the trouble, and turned the request aside with scant courtesy.

The merchant then tried another wholesale house. The brush was not in stock, neither did the salesman know where it was to be had, but he courteously offered to make the effort to procure it. Some days later the merchant received the brush. He was so pleased with the courteous manner in which his request had been cared for that he opened further business relations with the house, and soon transferred his account from the other concern, and gave his business where it was more noticeably appreciated. Years passed, and the merchant prospered greatly, until his purchases from that house amounted to hundreds of thousands of dollars a year.

We may not all have hundred-thousand-dollar customers in humble disguise making requests of us, but similar results, differing only in degree, are a natural reward of unselfish courtesy. It's the old story of the sugar and the flies.

“SOME AN HUNDREDFOLD”

It is a matter of continual interest to see how big things often grow from small beginnings. A salesman in a store went to a great deal of trouble to get a certain kind of button I wanted, an item worth only five cents. I was much impressed with the spirit in which he took the trouble to satisfy such a small demand, and I said to him, “You are certainly very kind.”

“Not at all,” he said. “That ’s what I am here for.”

“I ’m afraid your business doesn’t grow very fast from orders like that,” I said.

“Perhaps not,” he said, “if you count only the profit on the first transaction. But I have seen a great deal of business grow out of smaller things than that. I can count ten good customers who came on the recommendation of one man I once went to a little extra trouble for. And I found two of my best friends among the newcomers. It is often that way. A man drops in here and is well treated, and mentions it to his friends and they mention it to theirs, and so business grows. It is like planting a grain of wheat. It may bring forth a whole head, and that planted again will bring a head for every grain, and so on. You can never tell where it will stop. I like to think that every little transaction is a grain of wheat that I am planting, and that it is worth all the trouble it costs, for it may bring in a big harvest some day.”

DON'T JUSTIFY A DEFECT

To excuse a fault to save the trouble of correcting it is always a dangerous policy. A salesman with this habit was the means of turning the entire tide of business away from his house. The concern he represented had a practical monopoly — at least a lion's share — of a certain kind of art work. A number of the largest customers were handled by this salesman. When the designs were submitted for approval before finishing the work, the buyers would suggest changes and corrections to be made. The salesman found it easier to argue against the alterations and pretend that there were technical reasons for having the design as it was. The deference which men of good judgment usually pay to technical knowledge often caused the buyers to concede the claims of the salesman. His success in "talking them into it" caused the habit to grow upon him until he would oppose every suggestion for a change or correction. The buyers finally got tired of arguing with him, and one by one they began to deal with a rival concern. Within three months after the first step was taken the original concern had lost practically all its large customers in that line, and the rival house was serving them.

The patient correction and improvement of detail is the highway to perfection. To shirk the task will undermine success in any line.

TACTFUL DEALING

A FAVOR granted graciously is of double value. Many persons overlook this, and if they grant favors at all it is only after being beaten at haggling, so they get no credit for it, and leave an unpleasant feeling in the mind of the other. If you intend eventually to grant a request, do so at once, and—do it graciously.

A man bought a house coat at a furnishing goods store, and when it was delivered at his home he noticed that the collar had in some way become soiled. He was very much wrought up, and took it to the store, intending to demand his money back, and vowing he would not trade there again. The salesman to whom the coat was returned saw instantly that it should not have been sent out that way, and instead of trying to convince the customer that it was all right — as others might have done — he said:

“We thank you very much, Mr. Smith, for calling our attention to this. It is certainly not as it should be, and we are very sorry to have given you any trouble because of our oversight. We shall be glad to have you make another selection, or if you prefer this one we can have it nicely cleaned and returned to you to-day.”

The customer was so completely taken by surprise that he quickly forgot his hostile feelings, and the matter was soon adjusted to his entire satisfaction. The slightest reluctance on the salesman's part might have brought on an unpleasant experience for both.

A HINT TO SALESMEN

THE salesman who follows up his customers too closely makes a big mistake. It is comparatively easy to smooth over a quarrel, or to adjust a misunderstanding, but it is seldom easy to patch up a threadbare welcome.

“One thing that puts a salesman in a bad light with me,” said a business man, “is to give me an estimate and then come around about six times a week to inquire ‘what is being done about that matter.’ A fellow tried that on me not long ago, and came in so many times I had to tell him to keep out. I said, ‘See here, Smith, you gave me that estimate last Tuesday, and you have been in here every day since. I told you at the time I would let you know when I was ready to talk to you further. Now if you will let the matter rest there till I get through talking it over with our own people who are interested in it, your proposition will get as good a hearing as anybody’s. But if you come in here again punching me up about it I will simply give you back your estimate and count you out of it.’ ”

“Isn’t that a rather extreme measure?” I asked.

“Well, maybe,” he admitted. “But you might not think so if you had several over-anxious salesmen nagging you every time you tried to investigate their house’s goods.”

COMMON SENSE IN SELLING

ONE morning I stopped at a fruit stand. I was in just the frame of mind in which I didn't want anything in particular but wished to buy something if I saw anything that appealed to me. But the instant I began looking at the fruit the old man came up and began pointing to this, that, and the other, not giving me a moment to think for myself. I simply turned and walked off—probably as thousands had done before me. I was willing to buy goods but not willing to have goods sold to me. And I went away disappointed at not having the privilege of looking over the stock.

This same spirit in some degree pervades almost every line of business. The men who own the business may know better, but they fail to impress the point upon their salespeople, and the result is the same as at the fruit stand. Many who are willing to be customers turn away when they are denied the privilege of looking over the goods and forming their own impressions.

But, on the other hand, there are many who desire immediate attention, and go away if they don't get it. There is a happy medium between these two extremes that is an important point in successful retail salesmanship.

KNOW YOUR GOODS

It stands to reason that a salesman should know thoroughly the goods he expects to sell. I went into a stationery store to buy a certain kind of letter file. The salesman fumbled around a few minutes and then said the article was not in stock. As the file I wanted was one of the most common of its kind, and as staple for a stationery store as sugar or salt for a grocery, I insisted that he must have it. He looked in two more places and then called another salesman, who went to a shelf not two feet from the place where he had looked, and brought out just the article I wanted, with a variety to choose from.

This sort of thing happens every day in nearly every store. Sales are lost and customers are disappointed because salespeople don't know their stocks.

Stock-keeping ought to be thoroughly classified. When you look up a word in the dictionary you don't hunt in several places. You find the letter it begins with, and the next and the next, and you can soon tell to a certainty whether it is in the dictionary or not. A stock of merchandise naturally falls into classes, and each class falls into subdivisions. If a salesman had an outline of the stock, and then would come systematically in touch with every variety, he could soon know perfectly every kind of pen, pencil, envelope, paper, or blank book in even the most complicated stationery stock.

WHILE OTHERS WAIT

It is unquestionably wrong to waste another man's time if you can help it. Some men who are in position to make others wait for them do not always appreciate this fact.

"Many a time," said a salesman recently, "I lose the very heart of the day waiting around to see some buyer who doesn't care anything about my time. Just the other day I called to see a man of that kind, and it took over an hour out of the best part of the forenoon just to learn that he would prefer to see me the next day. I was one of four men waiting outside his private office while he was talking with a fifth. When we had been there some time the door opened and the other man started to go. As he stood with one hand on the knob making a few parting remarks, the buyer said, 'By the way, did you ever hear that one about the Irishman and the horse?' The other evidently hadn't heard it, for he went in again and closed the door and didn't come out for fifteen minutes. And while they enjoyed that story and doubtless several more like it, we four were waiting—and the fact was plainly known. When I finally got in, after waiting from half-past ten till a quarter of twelve, I was told that it was too near noon to take the matter up, and that I could come in to-morrow and he would see me."

CALLING ON KING DODO

ONE of the best compliments you can pay to a man of authority in business is to say that he is "approachable." The time is passing when a man may sit in state in a private office while his employes tiptoe around outside to arrange with his secretaries for an audience, and tremble at the knees when they go in. People are getting too enlightened for that sort of thing. It reminds them too much of the comic opera king who sits in tinsel splendor and waves a sceptre of painted pine.

But there is another reason for the spread of business democracy. Men are finding out that high-mightiness hurts business. They are learning that the impetus of a great business pushes aside every obstacle that would impede its progress. The man who clogs the wheels is the first to get hurt. The machinery of events is a greater force than the whim of an individual. And so the lessons of common sense are being driven home to us all. A sure way to reach a man is through his business. And it is through the necessities of business that many of the best ideas of civilization come.

Business demands that the different workers — presidents, managers, foremen and employes — co-operate without inconvenience, delay, red tape, or nonsense. That is one reason why men in authority are becoming more approachable.

THE PINK TAPE ON THE CELERY

A FARMER noticed customers in the grocery store picking over the celery to find the best looking bunches, and it occurred to him to take more pains with his celery and see if it would bring a better price. He bought a bolt of pink tape for one cent a yard and tied the celery with it in neat bunches, and found that it sold quickly and brought more money, while the same kind of celery without the tape, placed right beside it, sold slowly and brought less.

After that he marketed all his produce in the most attractive manner he could, putting labels on his peach baskets with the name of the variety, wiping his apples, selecting and labeling his grapes — always treating his fruit and vegetables as if they were worthy of distinction. The fame of his produce grew, he enlarged his business, and became a wealthy man — all because of the pink tape on the celery.

It is human nature to concede distinction where others ascribe it, and many a business has prospered greatly because of a recognition of this fact. If your celery is worthy of the honor, put some pink tape on it, and it will meet a response from those who desire the best. But don't overdo the tape — don't try silk ribbon — or the effect is lost.

THE PERCENTAGE BASIS

THE advantage of considering comparisons by percentages is often overlooked by business men. A great merchant, noticing this tendency among his buyers and department managers, gave them a talk on the subject to impress them with its importance. His line of argument was as follows:

A man buys a piece of merchandise for \$500 and sells it for \$550. If he looks at the \$50 profit, and compares it with a \$5 profit on a smaller transaction, it looks large. Whether \$50 is a large sum or a small sum depends on what you are thinking about in comparison with it. When you judge it on a basis of percentages you see that it is only 10 per cent of the original cost — a very low gross profit for handling the merchandise. The man who neglects to use the percentage standard may often fool himself very badly. The same principle holds good, not only in the matter of gross profit, but in salaries, rent, advertising, light, selling expense, manufacturing expense — practically everything in which comparisons form a basis for judgment.

Percentage alone, however, is often deceptive. A man may gain 500 per cent over the business he did on the same day a year ago, when the actual sales on that day reduced to dollars might be insignificant. But even in this case percentage deserves its share of consideration.

WORDS BY THE WAY



FEEL YOUR WAY

MANY of our unpleasant experiences are merely the working out of some wrong theory we have admitted. A man who was beginning a new business got the idea that it was a good thing to put on appearances — whether circumstances warranted it or not. “I am going to show them,” he said, “that I am prosperous in my business, and I know business will gravitate my way because people like to deal with men who are making a success.” On this theory he drew on his limited capital and bought an expensive mahogany roll top desk, oriental rugs, and other office equipment to correspond, took expensive quarters, and organized an office force. Then he leaned back luxuriously in his great arm chair and expected business to “gravitate” his way. But it didn’t work. Business came slowly — regardless of the mahogany desk. Within three months the desk and fine rugs were sold at a sacrifice to pay running expenses.

As a matter of fact, there was business enough to make an encouraging start if his expenses had been planned accordingly. But he had planned his running expenses to be in keeping with the business he expected to have — perhaps with the business he desired to have — thinking that the show of prosperity would draw enough to make up the difference.

When you proceed on a theory, be sure the theory is not a fallacy. Many a man has wasted five years of his life because his theory was wrong.

GETTING A SCHEME

It is usually safe to talk plans over with well informed persons before you go very far. A "scheme" is a very fascinating thing, and often a very deceiving thing. A side light often saves much fruitless work. Those not under the spell of your scheme can see more clearly what you are refusing to let yourself see.

A publisher spent two months and hundreds of dollars working out the preliminaries of a campaign before he was willing to talk over the general idea with his lieutenants. When he finally did talk it over he was shown fundamental reasons why the plan was not a sound one, and was compelled, by sheer force of his own convictions, to drop the project.

But what of the wasted two months, and the unnecessary expense? And what of the work that might have been accomplished in those two months? That was the price of his tuition in the school of experience to learn this lesson: "Don't be afraid of putting your scheme to the test of adverse criticism. A scheme that won't stand a dash of cold water is only a 'scheme' after all."

CAREFUL INVESTMENTS

BAD investments have cost many a man the savings of years — because he didn't investigate.

"How can a man test a proposed investment?" I asked a prominent banker.

"There are two simple rules of investigation," he replied, "which one should always use. If they are applied by the individual investor they will often save him from unsafe investments. These two rules are —

"1. Investigate the men who control the company.

"2. Investigate the property itself.

"If it is not possible to learn about the men the next rule is — don't invest. And if you can't learn definitely about the property — don't invest. The honest company, knowing the well informed investors insist on these rules, makes the necessary information readily accessible. The unsound concerns hide the real facts, avoid investors who understand the business, and go after small investors who may be deceived by bald statements and extravagant promises made through advertisements."

These rules do not guarantee that an investment is safe, for even men of good standing may be deceived in their most conservative expectations. But such investigations will prevent many unsound ventures.

LOOK BENEATH THE SURFACE

THE work that makes the most show is not always the most important. Two young men were overheard talking about their work. One mentioned with pride how much was left to him — work that no one checked up — and how careful he was to do his work correctly and thus qualify himself for larger responsibilities. The other said cynically, “After you have worked for the old gentleman a while longer you will learn that what counts with him is what shows on the surface. He won’t give you credit for anything that he can’t see at a glance. I found that out when I first came here, and I have put my big apples on top ever since.”

“Well,” replied the first, “I am not working merely for his favor. I have my own standards to live up to, and my own character to build. I don’t expect to stay here always, and when I leave I would rather have a thorough business capacity than to stand high in the opinion of a man who never looks beneath the surface.”

The man who works “to seem and not to be” is like the boy in arithmetic who sets down the answer to his problem without working out the solution — thinking to deceive the teacher and get his marks without working for them. And the manager whose short-sighted policy encourages surface work is like the teacher who is fooled by the forced answer.

"GOOD MORNING"

Do you always remember to say "Good morning" in your most cheerful manner when you come into the office or the workshop? It is a little thing, but it is powerful to smooth the way for a pleasant day. How often we need to be reminded that it is the little things of life which go to make up happiness!

I remember one morning I was in an establishment on a business errand when the manager arrived for the day. With a cold stare he passed near several of his assistants, but without a word of cheer for the day. He walked up to one of the men and began talking business — a criticism within the hearing of others. Conversation ceased in the room, and the very atmosphere of the place seemed chilled — as if a window had been opened in winter.

Many times have I contrasted that incident with the spirit which I am glad to say prevails in many other offices — a spirit of cordial welcome and friendly fellowship, where "Good morning," "Good night," "Thank you," and "Please," grow like flowers in the tropics.

How little some men seem to realize the effect of their words on others! The spirit manifested by the head of a business permeates the establishment as surely and as completely as sugar sweetens tea. This important fact needs to be more generally understood. When it is, there will be more cheerful greetings of "Good morning" to start the day in the right spirit.

MORAL VENTILATION

THE mental and moral atmosphere of a business deserves ample consideration; it is a matter of great importance to the development of the individual.

A man who had been employed in an office where progressiveness and good feeling prevailed left to take a position at a much higher salary with another concern. But he quickly learned that the spirit of the new place was not like that of the old one. Men quarreled with each other over trifles, the manager was gruff and overbearing, the conversation was either made up of criticising each other or of matters equally unwholesome. The man soon discovered that the additional salary was more than offset by the unrefining influences, and he was glad of an opportunity to return to his old position at his former salary.

Many men get started in the wrong kind of business atmosphere and do not always realize that there are places where things are very different; and not appreciating this they do not make the effort to get into a better atmosphere or to purify the one they are in. Instead they spend a large portion of their lives under conditions as unwholesome as a closed room in summer.

When a man gets a "better offer" in salary, let him not fail to give attention to the moral atmosphere, for it may have a far greater influence on his career than any increase in salary can have.

PLEASE

IF you would like to do something to lessen the friction of business intercourse, cultivate the general use of the word "Please." Use it when you give an order, when you ask a favor, or make a request. Use it when you speak on the telephone. Use it especially in speaking to those who are working under your authority.

To say "Please" is one of the first lessons of childhood — and one of the necessary lessons of the well-rounded business life.

What a magic word is "Please!" And to what shall it be compared?

It is like the oil on the wheel—for it softens the friction of every transaction.

It is like the dot on the "i"—for though a very small thing, it is instantly missed when it is gone.

It is like the name on the cover of the book—for it is an index to what is within.

Learn to use this wonderful word — learn to love its charm, its sweetness and its power. It is only a little thing in itself, but the spirit that prompts its use is the essence of greatness.

THE VALUE OF HUMOR

HUMOR is a wholesome thing in the business life. Often when a clash of interests or a difference of opinion has strained relations almost to a breaking point, a touch of humor will save the day. Two men, who but a moment ago were angered at each other, stop a second to laugh together. The effect is magical — they are friends again, stronger than ever.

What is humor, that it should do this? It is not the mere idle jest, the counterfeit of true humor. The sense of humor is the ability to see the incongruity of disproportion. And this is the first step toward seeing the true proportion of things.

Humor is like salt — too much of it spoils the meat, but just enough gives it a flavor that nothing else can.

Make a roomy place in your business system for humor. Take life seriously enough to be sincere in all things, but with all your seriousness, retain and cultivate a measure of the wholesome ability to perceive the laughable unfitness of some things. And from that point of view you can the more clearly see things as they are. It is not easy to fool the man who can see the humorous side of things.

POWER IN POETRY

WE are accustomed to think of poetry as something apart from the everyday activities of life and having little or no place in the forces of the work-a-day world. But if we could look within the minds and hearts of men and women who are bearing the burdens of the great world of business, and could see how much of strength, and repose, and resolution, and hope, all ripening into action — if we could see, in brief, how much practical inspiration has gone into their lives through the mysterious power of poetry, we should be tempted to conclude that poetry has a part in the world's activities to a degree that transcends the world's ability to perceive and appreciate.

Men and women absorbed in the thoughts of daily routine, whether of high or low degree, should not, in their more busy years, forget the inspiration and comfort which poetry affords. To follow sympathetically the thoughts of the poet is to make the heart young again and give an impetus to every worthy action and thought.

PASS IT ON

WHEN you read anything that you think would be of special interest to some other person — and that he might otherwise never see — do you clip it and send it to him?

It would be a good plan for every large business house to cultivate this custom among its employes — especially among those in charge of a division of the business. Hundreds of valuable ideas are to be found in the thousands of papers and magazines which fall like snowflakes on every hand. It is clearly impossible for any one person to read them all. But if two hundred persons were exchanging memoranda of their observations, it would virtually give each the benefit of the good thoughts encountered by all.

I am never so grateful as when some friend points out to me a new and helpful idea, and many a time have I found just what I needed in a clipping sent me by some thoughtful person.

REACHING HIS AUDIENCE

AN author sat in his study one afternoon questioning his measure of success, and thinking of the years of toil he had spent in the effort to reach the hearts and lives of men. The postman came and handed him two letters. One was from a boy working in a grocery store, saying, "I find in your book just what I have always craved to know." The other letter was from the president of a great university, saying, "I sat up till three o'clock last night reading your book, and find it a great help to me."

The author was deeply moved. He thought again of the long years through which he had struggled to master a style that would bring his message home to the widest circle of readers. Here was evidence that he had reached that ideal.

Wasn't this worth all the effort? The satisfaction of that moment threw a spell of joy across the memory of his struggles. And in that hour came an inspiration — a noble resolve, not to look back at the struggle, but to look forward to success. And there also was written one of those grand sentences which seem to compress the deep living of years between their words — this conviction: "What people want to read is what will help them to live."

ACQUIRING GOOD TASTE

GOOD taste is indispensable to the success of anyone having to do with merchandise — and nothing can atone for the lack of it.

Many imagine that taste is an inborn quality which cannot be acquired. But this is only partly true. Like many other qualities it is largely a matter of education.

If a man finds himself lacking in good taste he should not, merely because of the theory of inborn qualities, give up the effort to attain it. Let him consider what goes to make up good taste, and what are the usual causes of poor taste, and thus he may make some progress in the right direction.

What is taste? It is an intelligent conforming to certain reasonable standards of proportion, form, color, line, material, ornamentation, environment, complement, contrast, utility, and tone. Poor taste is largely an ignorant self-sufficiency — a selfishness that disregards the opinions of others, tramples upon accepted standards, and clumsily substitutes egotism for refinement.

Accepted standards are not all mere custom — some of them are based on fundamental principles. A willingness to conform to intelligent standards will do much to improve the taste of anyone.

ROTTEN APPLE ECONOMY

A FRIEND of mine was talking of the false sense of economy which many people have, which makes them do very ridiculous things under the impression that they are models of common sense.

“When I was a boy,” he said, “we had a large orchard. My father was one of those economical individuals. He would make us pick out all the apples with rotten spots in them, and eat those first. By the time we finished one supply of rotten apples there would usually be others rotten enough to begin on. If not, we were supposed to wait until some began to spoil before we took them. In this way we went all winter, eating rotten apples, and letting the good ones stay in the bins. It always seemed a wicked waste to my father to see anyone eat an apple that was sound enough to keep a while longer.”

Do you eat your rotten apples and leave the good ones till they spoil? Do you neglect your rich and mellow opportunities to come in touch with the best things of life while you satisfy yourself with the meager salvage of things outgrown? Beware of “rotten apple economy.” It would rob you of the best that life holds for you.

THE TATTERED SHIRT SOPHISTRY

MANY a man's small measure of success has been due to the proverb, "A tattered shirt may cover an honest heart." Not that the proverb is untrue, but that it is misinterpreted. One of its harmful interpretations is that which leads a man to excuse himself to himself for lack of care in his dress. He may know he has an honest heart, but the world is looking at the tattered shirt — and the world is wont to judge men by what it sees of them. It is coming to be understood that an honest heart can be most effective when it does not neglect to give outward expression to inward worth. The truly honest heart is not willing to let itself be covered by the tattered shirt when there is a better one to be had.

It behooves every man who has ever listened to that easy-going slip-shod philosophy to stop and try to count up what it has cost him. He cannot really count it because he does not and cannot know how very much the cost has been. But it is well perhaps that he does not know, or else he might be discouraged in his effort to regain the ground he has lost. But the only course open to him is to regain as much of it as he can — by laying aside the tattered shirt and wearing a more worthy covering for his honest heart.

NOT HERE BELOW

Two employes in a large establishment were talking about their work. One said: "I believe every man working at the same job ought to get the same wages. That 's fair for everyone."

"Well," replied the other, "that may please the fellow who isn't willing to do his best. But for me, I want the satisfaction of knowing that if I work harder and more intelligently than the average man I can get that much more money."

"Yes," said the first, "and you are just the kind of fellow that upsets everything."

"Upsets what? Upsets a soft job for some fellow that won't work. There isn't a man that works at anything that wouldn't be better off in the long run if he got paid according to what he does."

"I'll do more when I get paid more, and not before. If I get two dollars I'll do two dollars' worth of work, and if I get three dollars I'll do three dollars' worth of work. What's the matter with that?"

"Well," said the other, "you'll look a long while before you find anybody that will pay you more in the hope that you will do more. The world isn't built that way. It may be that way in the fool's paradise, but not down here below."

HOW HONEST ARE YOU?

UNLESS we keep close watch of our motives we are likely to find ourselves doing little things that are really dishonest. A young man was preparing to issue the first number of a trade magazine. He approached a prominent merchant and asked him for an advertisement. When it was refused he said to the merchant: "I can't afford not to have you represented. I will give you this page free. That will give me a start with the other merchants."

"Will you tell them you gave me the page free?" the merchant asked, playfully.

"Oh, no, I couldn't do that," the young man said.

"In other words," said the merchant, "you want them to believe something that isn't so — the value of it to you depends on their believing that I paid for the space. You want me to put my name down there to back up the lie. You ask me to betray the confidence those other merchants might have in my business judgment — for which you offer me a space which you value at ten dollars. And this is the way you propose to start your new business! If they should ask you whether I paid for the space, would you tell the truth or tell them a lie?"

"When you put it that way it looks different," said the young man. "I am very grateful to you for showing me that point. I certainly don't intend to start my business on misrepresentation, but I had n't looked at it that way before."

UNWISE CHANGES

MANY a man has sacrificed a splendid opportunity by throwing up his position because of some fancied wrong. "It is a sad thing," said a manager, "to see how readily some employes will leave a good position. Just the other day I had occasion to reprimand a young man because his work was not what it should be. He had grown careless and was making mistakes. My effort to correct him was strongly resented. He got mad and asked for his money. If he had only taken the correction in the spirit in which it was given he might have remained with us indefinitely. But hundreds go that way. They can't stand censure, and they become angry at the slightest effort to correct them. I don't especially feel that it is my province to try to coax an employe to stay under the circumstances — he would be apt to put his own construction on it, and either get the idea that he was indispensable, or take delight in leaving when he thought he would be missed. I have quieted some of them down, and they were glad of it afterwards, but in many cases it is hard to do anything with them. Then they go to their friends and tell them a most exaggerated story, and of course the friends are not properly informed of the real situation and cannot always give them the advice they need.

REFUSING TO GROW OLD

MEN of forty or fifty who are letting themselves think of themselves as if their days of usefulness were waning, need one thing — a new idea of themselves. They need to have their thoughts turned toward a period of greater usefulness still before them. A noted author on his seventieth birthday said: "I expect to do the best work of my life in the years now ahead of me. I have learned that a man may be as young as his thoughts. If he keeps informed on present day ideas, and lives in the present instead of in the past, he need not be an old man at all."

This wholesome spirit would put new life and purpose into many who are letting go of their interest in affairs because they think they are growing old.

One man began to study music when he was fifty, and became proficient in it. Another man became a painter of note although he had not touched a brush until he was forty-eight. Many of the best works of literature have been produced late in life. There are many inspiring examples to encourage those who will consider them.

If ever there was an emancipation idea that needed to be promulgated it is the wholesome doctrine of refusing to grow old. When you hear middle aged men talking of getting old, just advance this doctrine — that a man is as old as he thinks, and that he should keep up with present day thought and look forward to years of usefulness.

BUSINESS METHODS IN SCHOOLS

NEARLY every educational institution in the country is open to criticism from the business man's point of view, because it violates one of the first principles of sound business. That principle is to work every man at his best capacity. The business man employs an assistant to save his time, a stenographer to save the assistant's time, an office boy to save the stenographer's time, and modern office devices to save the boy's time. All business organization is based on this principle.

The educational institution often ignores this principle and requires its most capable workers to do certain work that less skilled persons could do. The keeping of laborious records, and all the multiplied detail attendant upon the conduct of classes, might properly be placed in the hands of persons especially suited to the work, leaving the instructors free to do their best in those higher lines of work for which they are prepared.

It is partly because of the unbusinesslike methods used in many of the schools, and the lack of appreciation of the economies and principles of business, that young men come from the schools unprepared to take such part in the business world as their age and talents in some directions ought to entitle them to take.

ARE WE ACTORS?

THE chief clerk in a large office was discussing with a friend the friction of business intercourse, the relative importance of the different officers and members of the firm, and the show of authority which was sometimes exercised around him.

“Doesn’t it worry you sometimes to know how to keep peace with them all?” asked the friend.

“Oh, I’ll tell you,” said the chief clerk. “I have come to look upon this whole business as a sort of stage. Each one of these men has his part to play, and there is just as much good acting going on right here as there is in any theater. We have melodrama, tragedy, and comedy, and all the variations, in the course of a forenoon. If you see these men off their guard they are just like anyone else; but if they are engaged in some transaction they assume a role and act it out until the curtain falls. It makes it easier when you look on it that way. A good deal that you might think is perverse human nature is merely acting. Since I found that out I haven’t let it worry me when the sparks fly. I look on as a spectator would, or think only of acting my part as the others do theirs.”

LETTERS THAT DO GOOD

MUCH good may be accomplished by writing letters of complaint, criticism, or suggestion. Such letters have a distinct value in rounding off the corners of commercial crudeness. Many notable improvements in methods, service and customs in business and in travel have been brought about by letters from observing persons. A careless salesman, a delayed package, a poorly served meal, a drastic rule, an overheated car, an irregular or inadequate service — such things are topics of vital interest to an alert business man, and a letter from a patron causes him to think deeply on the points criticised, and some definite action usually results. In this way hundreds are often benefited by the criticism of one.

Many persons hesitate to write to a building manager, store manager, railroad superintendent, or public official, for fear their letters will not be kindly received. But the fact is, most progressive men really appreciate such letters and desire well meant criticisms.

The spirit of the letter is important. The letters that accomplish the best results are not those which show anger and heated indignation; not those which vent unqualified condemnation; nor those which heap abuse on the institution involved — but rather are they those which calmly and courteously point out the defect as if it had escaped the manager's usually careful attention — perhaps graciously coupled with a deserved compliment.

BURN THE THISTLE-SEED

MISUNDERSTANDINGS should always be corrected as quickly and as thoroughly as possible. It may take time and trouble to do this, but it is worth while. Misunderstandings are prone to grow and spread. And, like a fire, they are easier to put out at the beginning than at any time later.

Most of the friction in business grows out of misunderstandings. At the bottom of nearly every case of antipathy there is a distorted idea of the motives and purposes of others. The fact is proved a thousand times when persons who have been out of harmony with each other reach an understanding and become friends again. Looking through a distorted glass the face of a friend appears unpleasant to look upon.

Especially should misunderstandings be carefully corrected when an employe is leaving a business, and has a feeling that an injustice has been done him. He should not be allowed to go away harboring resentment in his mind. Without the opportunity of talking it out, such a feeling may rankle in his heart for years, making him unhappy, and perhaps finding its way to other minds — setting afloat stories and rumors which react upon the business and the individual who was thought to be at fault. A little time spent in talking the matter out might save a great deal of useless trouble later on.

RECONSIDER LOST EFFORTS

MANY a good idea has been lost because the first efforts to introduce it were not successful. Some men give a new idea a meager trial, and if it does not quickly pay they discard it as having no value. The fact is that some of the best ideas in the world have been worked out through many failures. It takes faith to get a new idea established. And more often than not it takes courage to meet the prejudice of men who are used to doing the thing another way. Almost every great idea that has come to the world has met with opposition. Printing was at first necessarily done in secret. Men who first carried umbrellas were stoned in the streets of London. The effort to introduce stoves met with bitter denunciation. The railroad, telegraph, telephone, and typewriter were either opposed or ridiculed. Few of the innovations in office equipment have come without some manifestation of popular prejudice.

It is well to remember these things when introducing any new idea. The newer and better an idea is the more difficult it often is to make men see it.

Good ideas that have been forsaken because of such opposition, and declared to be failures before they have been fully developed, are entitled to reconsideration and perhaps a renewed effort to introduce them.

A GRAIN OF SALT

BUSINESS maxims should be applied with care. A misapplied truth is often the worst of errors, for it is adhered to with the assurance of truth, and without the caution that accompanies a doubt.

It is a good maxim to say, "Keep out of debt." But there may be times when to apply that strictly would be the worst thing one could do. It is sometimes just as wise to go in debt, as it is at other times wise to keep out of it. Many a business has been saved from failure by incurring a judicious indebtedness, and many a man has been able to take advantage of a valuable opportunity in the same way. Still the advice remains good, "Keep out of debt." In other words, avoid debt unless it can bring you some definite advantage.

No business maxim can be applied with the invariableness of the multiplication table. A man who has a good opening before him shouldn't place too much faith in the adage that "A rolling stone gathers no moss." Neither should he leave a good position just to follow the maxim, "Sell in the best market," lest he find to his sorrow that "A transplanted tree does not always thrive." Business maxims are all right in their place — a pat way of putting the thing; but many of them are only half-truths to begin with.

IT PAYS TO KICK

PROGRESS is born of protest. The best part of the history of the world has been made by kickers — people who were not willing to let things slide along, letting excuses take the place of performances, and accepting as satisfactory the first thing that was offered to them, but demanding better things, better service, better conditions.

Some business houses that furnish or manufacture supplies for other business houses—printers, lithographers, box makers, cabinet makers, engravers, to mention but a few of them—have three grades of service. There is one grade for the man who accepts without question almost anything they send him. There is another grade for the man who is known to be particular and asks for the best. And there is still another grade for the man who knows what he wants, issues his specifications according to an exacting standard, and kicks when he doesn't get all that is due him.

It is this third type of man that has done more than any other to advance the quality of manufactured products. Many of the best improvements in machinery, methods, designs, materials, and varieties can be traced back to the man who kicks till he gets what he wants. And in serving the cause of industrial progress he incidentally lives on the fat of the land.

NEWSPAPER INDIVIDUALITY

IN order to command the attention of business interests in the matter of advertising patronage, every newspaper should have some distinguishing characteristic. It should not be content with being merely a newspaper — it should aspire to be the foremost newspaper in its locality on at least one thing, as local news, financial news, sporting news, society news, literary things, or something which other papers in the same field do not cover so thoroughly. In other words, a paper should be made indispensable to the advertiser who wishes to fully cover the field in that locality. Nothing draws so much business to a newspaper as the fact that advertisers have to use it to reach a certain class of persons. There are enough good things to go around. No matter how many papers there are in a field, there is room for each one to do one thing better than any of the others can do it. As a matter of fact it is possible for a small local newspaper to become widely known outside its own immediate field if it contains even one thing the people want which is not to be found elsewhere. Some publications find their way around the world for the simple reason that they are the source of supply for some line of thought which no other publication contains.

THE IDEAL NEWSPAPER

THE business men who control the advertising patronage of newspapers have it in their power to render a momentous service to humanity by encouraging a purer press — affording substantial proof that it pays to be decent.

My ideal of a newspaper advertising medium is a clean, progressive home newspaper. It is a paper which is so filled with good thoughts for every member of the family that it finds a warm welcome and an eager reading wherever it goes. It is free from crime and scandal and all unwholesome things. It takes more pride in the quality of its circulation than in the mere quantity — but it has the quantity as well as the quality. It is not boastful, nor too much given to finding fault. It wins the confidence of the people by its simplicity, honesty, purity, and progressiveness. It handles the news of the day in a manner which appeals to the better class of people, and to the better nature of all people. It emphasizes the hopeful and thought-worthy features of the news, rather than the discordant and trivial ones. It has a permanent location for its special features. It is an authority on whatever it undertakes to exploit. It has a reputation for correctness. It regulates its advertising pages by reasonable requirements regarding display and illustrations, so that the page presents a pleasing whole, no matter how many advertisements are on it. It refuses a large percentage of the advertising which is offered to it, because such advertising is objectionable to its readers. It has a reputation for reliable

TH O U G H T S O N B U S I N E S S

advertising as well as for reliable reading matter. In such a publication, the advertiser should find his best opportunities. Long live the clean, wholesome, dignified, sensible, progressive home newspaper.

COMPARATIVE TYPOGRAPHY

ONE of the most important points in connection with an advertisement is the right sort of typography. There is a kind of irresistible attraction about a beautiful piece of printing; and there is something inherently repulsive about an inartistic page. It is said that the character of a town or city, and the degree of refinement attained by its people, can be pretty generally determined by the character of the signs used on its business houses. In some places you will see the windows and buildings covered with large signs, with letters that are crude, inartistic, and unsightly. It is evident that no truly refined person would put up such a sign over his business, nor allow it to remain on his premises for a moment. So when you see a great number of such signs you feel instinctively that the community is not of the highest order of refinement — to say the least. On the other hand you will see localities where the signs are of moderate size, even small, the letters chaste and refined, and you feel instinctively that refined people are there. This principle applies more or less to publications and advertisements.

HONEST ADVERTISING

It seems an uphill task to teach some advertisers that cunning misstatements have a reaction on their business, and that in the long run people will not believe a word they say. The competitive spirit would say, "Let them do it, who cares if they do ruin their own business?" But the progressive spirit knows that the influence of false advertising has a strong tendency to shake the public confidence in all advertising; so that in time the honest advertiser would not get the credit for telling the truth. It is the interest of every advertiser and publisher to point out the folly of false advertising, and to rid the public prints of every statement which smacks of untruth. Far better tell your competitor how to advertise successfully and honestly, than to allow him to poison the public mind with the thought that there is no honesty in advertising and in business, and that the business world is but a mad maelstrom of deceit and dishonesty. But through it all the honest advertiser and the honest business man is making his way to the front, and every day shows a larger recognition of his true position in the business world.

GLEANINGS

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GLEANINGS

YOUR interest in things depends largely on your interpretation. Some people think the prize picture is only a daub — but that is no discredit to the picture.

There is always room for the man who can be relied upon to deliver the goods when he said he would.

The best compensation for doing things is the ability to do more.

Neglecting to broaden their view has kept some men doing one thing all their lives.

A penny held close to the eye would obscure a chest of gold ten feet away.

Discern a need and fill it — that's the way to build a big business.

A man may work harder counting peanuts than signing treaties.

Don't hire Shakespeare to write plays and then keep him busy addressing envelopes.

When Paderewski is playing the "Minuet," don't interrupt him to ask for his autograph.

Progressiveness is looking forward intelligently, looking within critically, and moving on incessantly.

Resourcefulness is the star accomplishment. It is the master-key that fits all the locks of business requirements.

To pass an idea on is to multiply its power.

This very hour is rich with opportunities which you may lose if you do not use them right now. The present moment is the only kind of time you will ever have. If you allow yourself to disregard this hour's worth, what assurance have you that you will not also waste that other hour in which you mean to do great things?

Many young men waste their opportunities as recklessly as the man of sudden wealth who lights a cigar with a twenty dollar bill.

It is possible to be so busy watching fire-flies that we have no time left to look at the stars.

Always beginning things and never finishing them is like pumping water out and letting it run back.

The progressive man has nothing to regret and nothing to fear because of the passing of time.

Few investments are so sure and profitable as the effort to equip one's self in the four fundamental accomplishments — how to think accurately and comprehensively, how to express thought in talking and writing, how to work skillfully with the hands, and how to take one's place among men.

If we could eliminate from our lives all the actions and thoughts that are non-essential to our progress, which serve no useful purpose, and leave no by-product of value, what magnificent distances we might cover in a few short years!

Every action is a wise or unwise investment for future dividends. The past is gone, what we call the present moment goes over to the past even while we are saying the word, leaving only the future in which to work and enjoy. Whatever we do is done for an effect in that future, be it near or far, a minute or a year. Consider well, then, the effect you are trying to produce.

The Golden Rule is the world's greatest business maxim — if not, what is?

One man uses a stream to fish in, another makes it turn a saw mill.

The value of a dollar is not measured entirely by what it would buy, but also by what it might deprive you of if you didn't have it at the right time.

Learn how to talk; it is one of the most valuable accomplishments any man can have.

Lack of success is largely the fruit of wasted opportunity.

Everything we do is merely practice work for something greater, and we grow in capacity in the proportion that we throw our best efforts into whatever we undertake.

Everything well done is good advertising.

Thousands of men are classed below their natural level because they use bad grammar.

Lack of thoroughness is one of the universal faults.

The world may yet see greater inventions than printing, steam engines, and wireless telegraphy. The age of fixing limits for good things has passed.

No man should be called great until he is a gentleman.

Always do everything you undertake as well as you would if it were to be inspected by the highest authority on that subject.

Don't strain at the hub of the ponderous wheel — move a cog that fits into the rim.

What it takes a man ten years to learn may take him but a minute to tell.

You can save yourself years of effort by utilizing the knowledge and experience of others — beginning where they leave off.

The true diplomat is the man who has advanced more than others in the gentle art of getting along with his fellow men.

Good enough is not good enough for the man who would make his mark.

Just think of the things that haven't been done!

Are you marching or marking time?—it takes about the same amount of motion, so don't judge by that.

Make it your business to know what is the best thing in your line, and then work in that direction.

The years ahead will require more able men than ever before — are you training for it?

Ideas govern the governors, rule the rulers, and manage the managers of all nations and industries.

Every new continent lies overseas.

Some things have to be undertaken on faith. Suppose Columbus had been as weak-kneed as you are!

Napoleon might have had an automobile — if men had known enough to rig it up.

Cæsar's army might have waited outside the city gates until some one discovered a pebble in the end of the key.

Freak advertising may amuse its originators, but common sense advertising will sell more goods.

Few things do more to retard the natural progress of a business or a movement than a lack of intelligent co-operation.

THOUGHTS ON BUSINESS

There is little hope for the man who is not willing to be told.

A wastebasket is one of a business man's best friends.

A year of experience means much or little according as we have gained one point a day or one a month.

Unity of purpose and action is essential to the full success of any business.

Conservatism is often merely a polite name for being in a rut.

Precedents must give way to progressiveness.

A few years ago that great building yonder was merely a pencil mark, and before that it was an idea.

A letter is a representative of a business — and a representative should never wear cap and bells if he expects to be taken seriously.

Red tape is system gone to seed.

Spontaneity is the goose that lays the golden eggs.

Salesmen make paths in the forests of prejudice which afterwards become the streets of a metropolis.

If you spend two-thirds of the waking hours of your life in an office there is no harm in making it habitable.

THOUGHTS ON BUSINESS

In an electric light age it won't do to stick to a tallow-candle standard.

It is just as easy to think of a mountain as a hill when you turn your mind to it.

The angels keep track of quality, and the boss of quantity. See that you please both.

Big things are only little things put together.

That little experiment of Columbus cost seven thousand dollars — it's a good thing he had the nerve to try it.

The captain sits in the cabin, but he had to work hard and learn a lot to get there.

A tree without leaves doesn't give much shade and never bears apples.

To know but one page of the dictionary doesn't give you much of a vocabulary.

While in the main every move should pay for itself, there is an exception in the case of good but feeble tendencies whose ultimate is manifestly worth while, but whose immature stages yield no profit. Many of the finer elements of growth require outside support at the start. Every great man in the world's history was once a baby. If every truly upward tendency is fostered with parental solicitude, the development of a business, an industry, or a nation is assured.

Beware how you trust the man who has tried to flatter you.

The most far-reaching work is teaching; for it calls into action the latent capacities of others, virtually accomplishing in the aggregate vastly more than the teacher could do by his own efforts, however great his individual capacity for work. The business captain of the future will be more than ever a teacher.

Harmony in an organization is an essential, but it should not be sought by making costly sacrifices to wrong conditions and tendencies. A fair compromise has its uses; but if the right is the real object of both sides it can be discerned and followed to the entire satisfaction of all concerned.

Custom has a two-fold meaning: on the one hand it represents the ripened fruit of experience, the final selection after all other ways have been found inferior; on the other hand it may indicate a stupid and unnecessary submission to the despotism of past error and outgrown conditions.

It is helpful often to think of the fundamentals of your business. When dealing too continuously with details, thought is apt to become narrowed down, principles and policies forgotten, and effort misdirected.

Sarcasm is the sour milk of human kindness.

Cities are built a brick at a time.

Decisions on vital points should seldom be made without advice, so that all sides of the question may be properly considered. The far-reaching effects of even small decisions necessitate that the fullest possible measure of wisdom be permitted to govern the case.

Much effective work is done quietly and with no outward sign. This work, usually vital, should be encouraged by letting it be understood that credit is being given for such work. Withholding such credit forces effort to seek outward effect only, and forfeits pioneer work.

It is well to acquire a habit of analyzing every problem that confronts you: the single stick may be readily broken, but taken in a bunch it resists your strongest efforts. The application of this principle is almost without end. By it you may grasp the fundamentals or details of a complicated business, improve your merchandise, work out inventions, solve perplexing business problems, develop opportunities, beget foresight, overcome faults — in short, you may progress rapidly and surely along any desired line.

Experience cannot properly be measured by time. One man mastered five branches of printing in ten months; typesetting, type-founding, linotyping, stereotyping, and web press operating — and taught them to inexperienced men in Australia. It is possible to step over the arbitrary time limits for gaining experience, to shorten the process by crowding achievements closer together, and thus save many a wasted year.

To properly interpret the beautiful is to discover a new world.

In all reform efforts special attention may properly be given to persons who are in their way leaders of thought, and who therefore help to mould the public opinion; every stroke with them is as a hundred strokes elsewhere.

The ability to write a good business letter is a valuable asset. Since almost every large transaction turns on the pivot of a letter, the man who writes the letter wields a power which is worth cultivating.

To place a proper estimate on the power of letter-writing is a big step towards business success. Every one has heard of instances where a single letter has turned the favors of fortune. The chief ways of developing ability in this field are as follows: write important letters by hand before dictating, consider the relative merits of incoming correspondence, study the art of rhetoric, and take pains with every letter you write.

As every business man has something to sell — merchandise or services — it is important to acquire those qualities which go to make up salesmanship: courtesy, tact, knowledge of goods, judgment, accuracy, energy, appearance, and dignity. It avails nothing to say that these qualities are inborn. Whoever lacks them can measurably acquire them. The way to do so is open; observe those who possess them, adapt but do not imitate their best traits, analyze the subject and master it in sections, love your work, and be in earnest all the time.

The process of elimination insures a selection which is self-evident and final. By discarding those elements that are less than the best, only the best can remain. In selecting printing paper, for example, you readily reach a conclusion by discarding the samples which are too heavy, too light, too expensive, too cheap, too rough, too smooth, and so on. By thus removing the possibility of a doubt a wholesome assurance is gained which wakens a greater energy and gives freedom to procedure. In buying a carload of paper you feel no hesitancy if you have considered everything of the kind in the market. The application of the principle is unlimited: it determines the size, form, color, pattern, quality, method, time, and price. It is the last word on mooted points; and its use in reaching a conclusion cannot be too strongly urged as a factor in business progress.

Non-essentials crowd in upon us, take up our time, sap our energy, distract our thought, amuse us, interest us, pretend they are important, deceive us, and mightily rob us of time, money, peace, and progress. Yet it is possible to have our purpose so clearly fixed in mind that we readily detect that which is non-essential, and so are able to avoid the waste. Herein is seen the value of an ideal. Fixed in the distance, it enables us to see where falls the straight line leading to it, and thus shows how far out of our proper path any given object may lie, as well as the stepping stones over which we must go to reach it.

The person who first handles a proposition is in a great measure responsible for its final character.

Don't submit a thing for approval that is less than your best; it might be accepted as it is, thus forfeiting the possible improvement you could give it.

The great ship cannot move until the engine starts; the engine cannot start until the engineer pulls the lever; the engineer cannot pull the lever until he gets the signal from the captain; and the captain won't give the signal until he gets the idea that it is time to go.

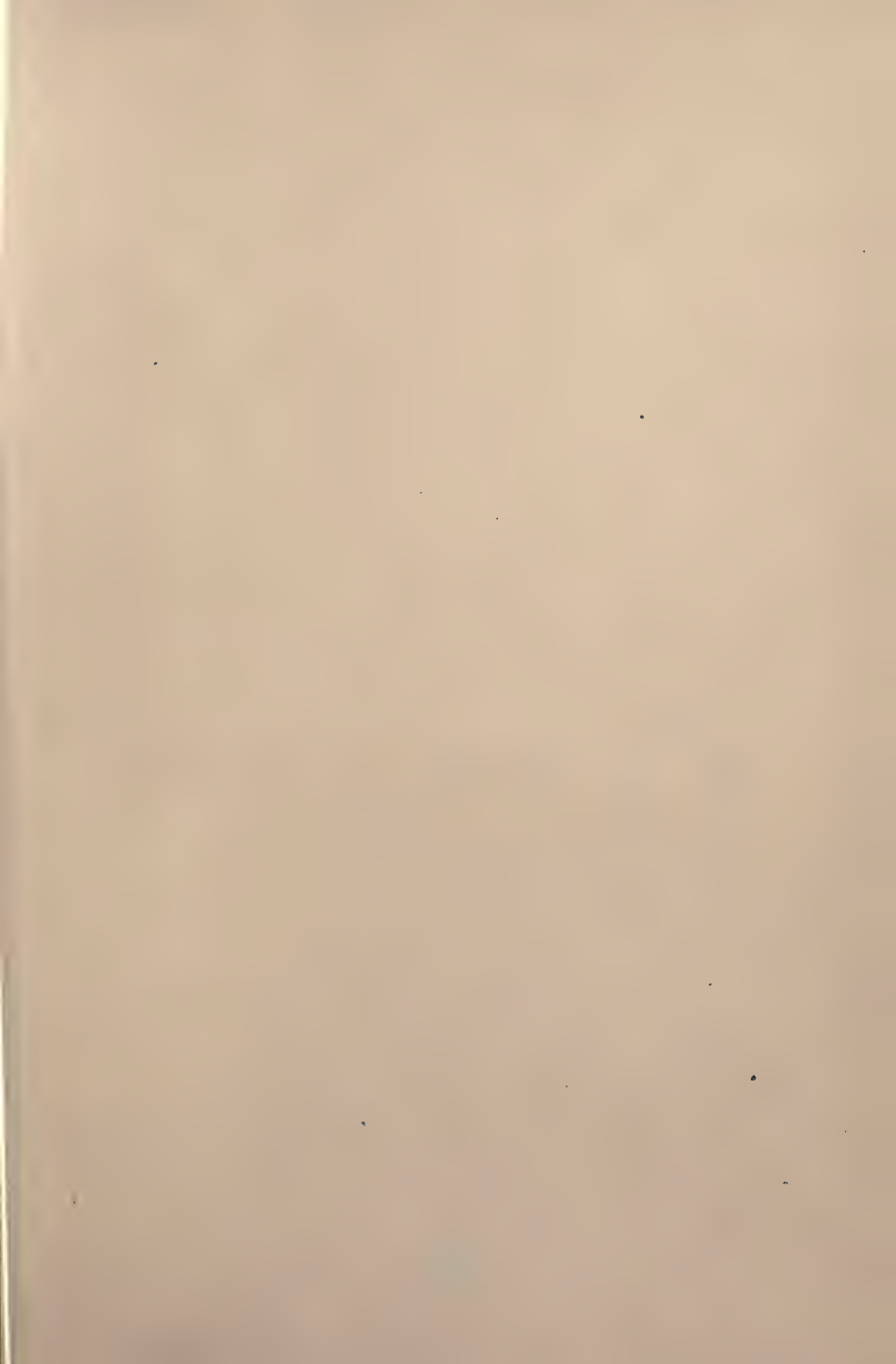
Most of the things that occupy the time and thought of humanity are non-essential to progress toward the ideal life. The great essentials of progressive living are hidden beneath a mass of age-evolved customs, selfish motives, and insincerity of purpose. A few — a very, very few — perceive faintly these essentials and are found working for their universal recognition. The world's great need calls for thinkers and workers. These are coming, not by the way of the schools, but through the awakening of unselfish life motives in the hearts and lives of men and women in every walk of life.

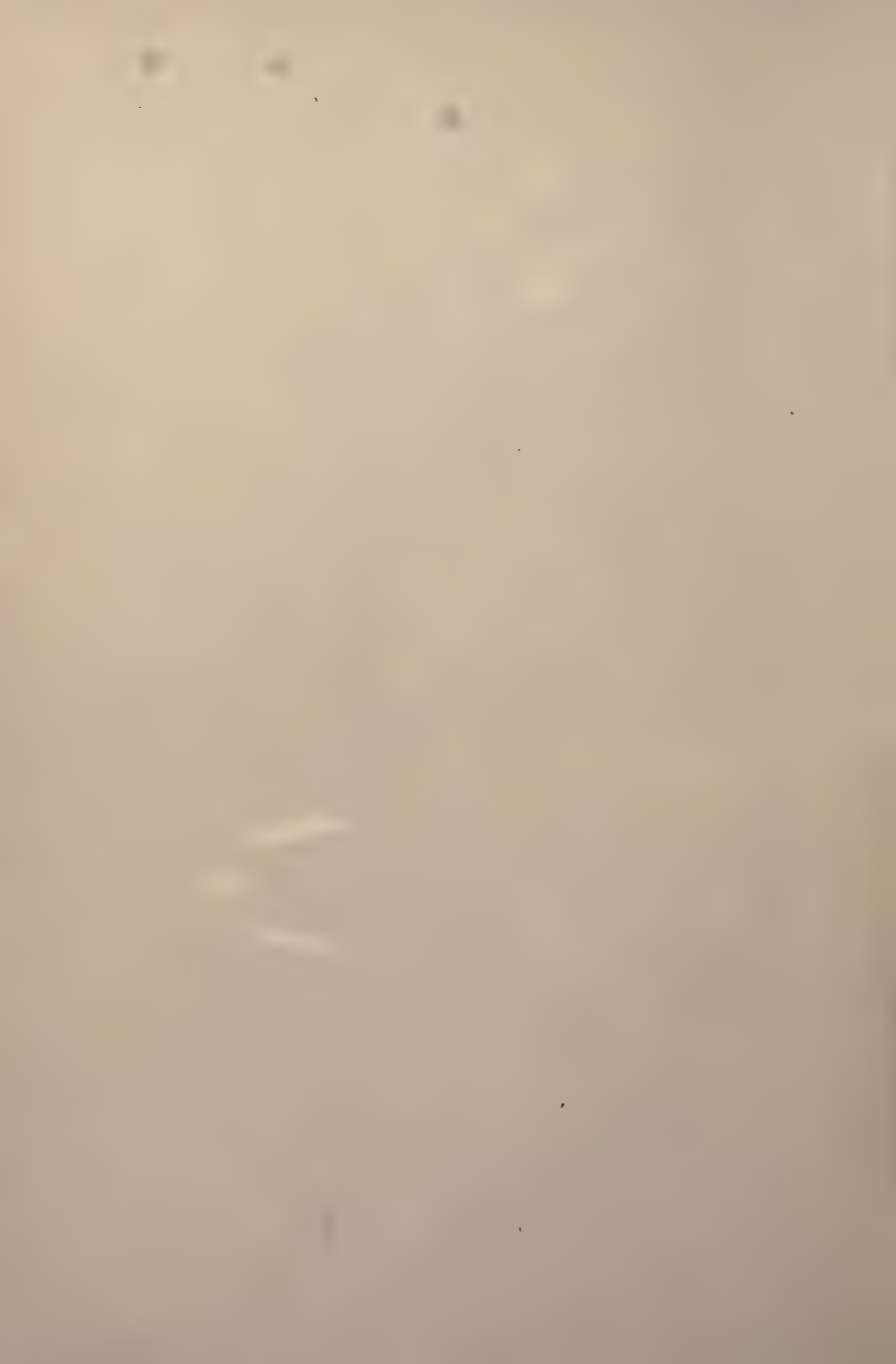
It is refreshing to know that there are great forces for good at work in the business world; that improvements are but the natural expression of uplifted thought; that example, purer motives, higher ideals, and the rivalry of excellence are leavening the world; that oppression is decreasing in order that spontaneous effort may be utilized; that courtesy and kindness are gaining recognition as factors of success; and that men are learning to love their daily work because through it they feel the divine impulse.

THE OUTLOOK

SOMETIMES when I think of the days that are before us, and the better things that a few more decades of progress must surely bring — the fuller fruition of certain general tendencies for good now springing up; the fuller utilization of the undeveloped power and resources in men and women; the higher ideals and standards as to the moral and æsthetic phases of business life; the gravitation of more rational men toward the control of industrial affairs; the awakening of popular appreciation of the opportunities of self-improvement; the uprooting of biased theories which warp the judgment and misguide men and organizations; the reform of systems and policies to more properly conserve, develop, and distribute the energy, materials, and products of industry; the increase in the spirit which welcomes constructive criticism; the rapidly increasing improvements in mechanics, architecture, and systems of transportation and communication; a wider recognition of individual rights to comfortable working conditions, peace of mind, leisure, and the fruit of one's labor; and the broad-minded co-operation in efforts that make for the common good — I cannot but feel that the outlook is cheering, and that the moments are all too few in which to fully prepare ourselves to intelligently appreciate and take a worthy part in the activities and enjoyments of that time.











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